Cooking of the Maharajas

The Royal Recipes of India

Shivaji Rao & Shalini Devi Holkar

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

Food—its preparation, presentation, and delectation—has for centuries been an integral, significant part of the culture of India, touching all aspects of Indian life from religion, art, and literature to history and social convention. Traditionally, the highest level of Indian cuisine has been found in the royal kitchens of the maharajas, the one-time rulers of India's princely states, but with the disappearance of the maharajas, that great culinary tradition—passed down through the years from cook to cook as a kind of gospel for the table—has been nearly forgotten.

The authors of this book are in a unique position to rescue this remarkable cuisine from obscurity, and to preserve its finest recipes along with the legends and stories that have always accompanied them. Shivaji Rao Holkar, the former Maharaja of Indore in Central India, and his American-born wife, Shalini Devi—a superb cook and a delightful writer—have traveled through the country since their marriage in 1966, collecting recipes from palace chefs, testing dishes (in American and European kitchens as well as in India), and studying the vast literature of Indian food and cooking.

This beautiful book is the result of their researches: a collection of over 100 recipes, handsomely illustrated with photographs and drawings, and further illuminated by a rich sampling of Indian legend and lore as recorded in the old texts or imprinted on the memories of former princes and their master chefs. These are not Americanized adaptations but authentic meals—and from the rich

(continued on back flap)

Cooking of the Maharajas

Cooking of the Maharajas

The Royal Recipes of India

Shivaji Rao & Shalini Devi Holkar

The Viking Press
New York

Copyright © 1975 by Shivaji Rao Holkar and Shalini Devi Holkar
All rights reserved
First published in 1975 by The Viking Press, Inc.
625 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022
Published simultaneously in Canada by
The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Holkar, Shivaji Rao.
Cooking of the maharajas.
Includes index.
1. Cookery, Indic. I. Holkar, Shalini Devi, joint author.
II. Title.
TX724.5.I4H57 641.5'954 74–7503
ISBN *0–670–24026–5*

Printed in U.S.A.

Dedication

During the era of Princely India, the Maharaja would hold a special court on Dasshera, that day of the year set aside to honor the symbols of his rule. All the noblemen of the state would appear in full regalia to pay *nazar* —homage and respect—to their master by offering him a specially minted silver rupee as a token of their fealty.

We have had many masters during the years we have spent learning the royal recipes of India, and we hope that these recipes will stand as our testimonials to them. But one master will always stand above and apart from all the rest, His Highness the Maharaja Digvijaya Singh of Sailana. Without his aid and inspiration, this book would have been like a dish lacking that final touch which makes it truly memorable. We would like this book to be our culinary *nazar* to the Maharaja of Sailana, a truly great host and chef.

—Shivaji Rao Holkar
—Shalini Devi Holkar

Long ago and far away, there was a land so blessed with the riches of nature, that people said of it, "Surely the gods must smile upon this land and upon its people."

So vast and varied was the land that not one but many kings ruled over her, and her people were content. They said each of his own ruler, "We have eaten of his salt; he is *Annadatta,* the giver of food."

And they meant by this: We have shared with our protector the fruits of his rule, and, by our love and service, we have protected him in return. We are bound to one another by the food that sustains us all.

Time passed and there were many changes in the land. But some things remained as they had always been, and among these was the saying, "We have eaten of his salt." For that which is written in the ancient texts is still held by all to be true:

Whatever creatures dwell on this earth,
by food, in truth, they live.
And into food they shall pass.
For truly, food is the chief of beings.

—Taittiriya Upanishad, eighth century B.C.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks to the people without whose help this book would never have been.

Dhulji Maharaj, Raja Ram, Doctor Saheb, Laxman, Shastriji, Tiwari Saheb, and Rajen.

Usha and Satish, Rao Saheb Bedla, Kumund Mehta, Durga Bhagwat, Usha Bhise, Dr and Mrs Moti Chandra, Dr Anand Krishna, Dr Subramaniam, Dr Shivaramamurti, Dr Morley, Andhare Saheb, Dr Madani, Dr Gai, Haku Shah, Tubbak Maaz, and Gokhale Saheb.

Dr and Mrs William Archer, Robert Skelton, Betty Tyers, Stuart Cary Welch, William Hodgson, and Barbara Burn.

We thank all our friends and family who put us up—and put up with us—during the four years that went into making this book.

We hope that the preservation of these recipes will serve as our thanks to the many royal families who shared their secrets with us.

Contents

INTRODUCTION *1*

Cooking Techniques *9*
Philosophy of Indian Food *10*
The Nature of a Being and His Food *12*
The Time of the Year and Food *14*
The Stages of Life and Food *17*
Characteristics of the Cook *20*
The Kitchen *21*
The Sequence of the Meal *30*
The Properties of Food *32*
Old Cookbooks *36*

Part I / Rajasthan *47*

1 Sailana *53*
2 Udaipur *87*
3 Jaipur *103*
4 Jodhpur *113*
5 Bikaner *125*
6 Kishengarh *134*
7 Palanpur *140*

Part II / Central India *155*

8 Gwalior *161*
9 Baroda *173*
10 Indore *183*
11 Hyderabad *196*

Part III / North India 209

12 Patiala 215
13 Benares 231
14 Kashmir 245
15 Delhi: The Mughal Dynasty 266

Part IV / South India 283

16 Travancore-Cochin: The Ancient Kingdom of Malabar 289
17 Mysore 300

A GUIDE TO MENU PLANNING 313
MAIL-ORDER SOURCES 327
INDEX 331

Cooking of the Maharajas

Introduction

My cook looks like Mahatma Gandhi—a better-fed, Central Indian version. His name is Dulji, but I call him "Maharaj" and he calls me exactly the same. "Maharaja" means great ruler or, sometimes, great sage. It is a title of respect in India, Dulji's way of acknowledging my relationship to his ruler, and mine of calling him a venerable cook. For some time, in fact, "Maharaj" was the extent of our conversation. As an American and a new bride, I was a novice in all things Indian, and that included cuisine—his special field.

I first met Dulji on the eve of my marriage to the son of the Maharaja of Indore, a former Princely State in Central India. My culinary debut took place the same day; I overturned a bowl of rice on the threshold of the palace. This was a ritual ceremony and had a great deal of significance: prosperity, fertility, and happiness spilled into the palace with the rice. It was Dulji who had prepared the dish.

It was to be at table that, still without benefit of the language, I learned my first lessons about India. Every day Dulji would send up from the kitchen round silver trays full of gastronomic enigmas, neatly arranged in little footless silver bowls. This was a period of surreptitious side-glancing on my part. My Dumas Dictionary, Larousse, and even Emily Post were of no help; so I resorted to copying my husband in every detail of the eating procedure.

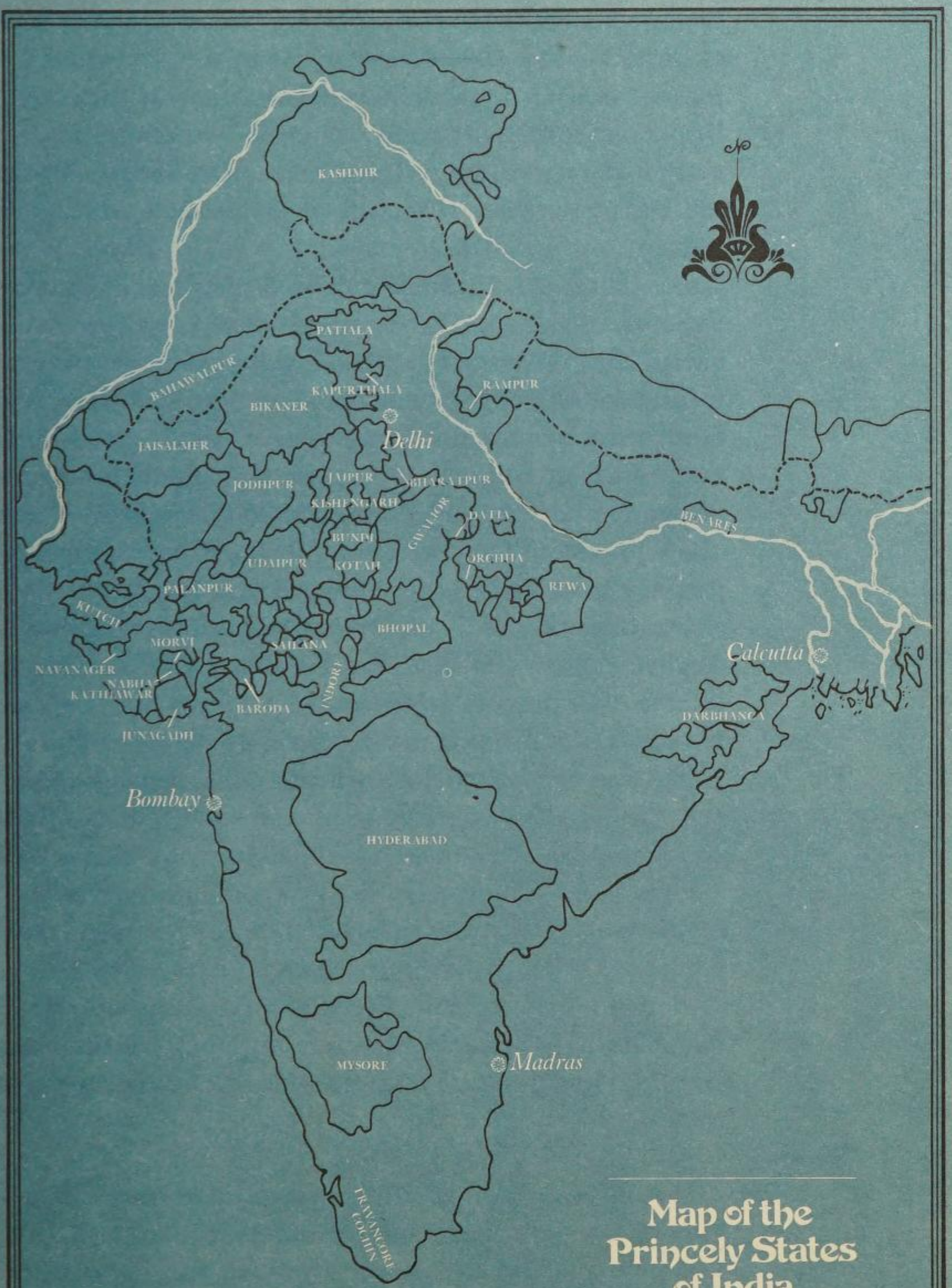
Gradually it became clear that the first step was to grasp

the little bowl containing rice and, with a modest but sure flourish, deposit its contents in the middle of the tray. Following this, a wide range of possibilities was open. Taste and texture of the foods in each bowl ranged from the solid and familiar meat through vegetables (still relatively wieldy in the hand) to the stubbornly uncontrollable lentil concoctions called *dals*. The manipulation, or in my case the desperate mustering, of these assorted delectables was to be accomplished solely with the right hand, the left remaining discreetly concealed in the lap, because it is used for the morning ablutions and therefore considered unclean.

Rice was the neutral arena, the lone buffer between me and the food set before me. An unobtrusive little wheaten bubble called a *puri* kept reappearing on my tray, hot and mercifully helpful in conveying bits of food from tray to mouth. Though my first instinct had been to carve this delicate little bread and eat it plain, I found neither knife nor fork for the purpose, and so fell in with the accepted practice of using the *puri* as a dainty scoop for other foods.

Tactful aids in this method of eating were the silver pitcher, soap, and towel always brought around at the end of the meal. And tactful indeed were the pitcher-bearers, who in those early days carefully averted their eyes from the tell-tale crumbs in my lap.

My new family's custom of eating at table spared me, a fledgling, from contending with the additional intricacies of eating on the floor. Nor is it a practice in our house to express satisfaction with the meal in the classic Eastern fashion of belching. But I am told that many an anxious housewife, not allowed to eat with her husband's guests, waits outside the dining room for this most expressive and windy compliment to her culinary abilities. Customs and tastes, however, vary widely all over India, from the most orthodox to the most liberal. There are those who eat only rice with their meals, those who eat only wheat, those who cook only in clarified butter, and those who would never



Map of the Princely States of India

use anything but coconut oil. There are even family cooks so orthodox that should anyone else in the household trespass beyond a certain line in their kitchens, they would throw out all the food then cooking, declare it impure, and retire in a huff to sulk and bathe. (Naturally, crossing the line is the favourite sport of children in such households.)

Other Indians, in the past, carried their fear of contamination by those of different castes to such an extent that guests were served only in clay bowls, which were broken immediately after use. One very strict Brahmin maharaja even today avoids meeting foreigners after his morning bath, since shaking hands with them entails the necessity of yet another complete bath. (Meeting other Indians is not a problem. They never touch, but say *namaste,* each person's hands joined together as though in prayer.) True also are the tales of the days when maharajas, venturing to England across the ocean they called "Black Water," carried with them a six-months' supply of water from the sacred Ganges, refusing to drink any other.

The more I learned of such punctilio and the more I tasted of Dulji's excellent food, the more curious I became to investigate the mysteries of Indian cooking myself. I knew that, although Dulji was a Brahmin and a strict vegetarian, he would be willing to relax certain regulations for me. (Technically I am considered by orthodox Hindus to be without caste and therefore an "outcaste.") Yet it was some time before I overcame my uncertainties about proper palace decorum and determined to satisfy my curiosity.

My first sortie into the underground world of our kitchen was not accomplished without trepidation. Gathering my sari about me, I said a prayer, and invoking the meagre preschool Hindi that I had learned, descended the long staircase into our cellar kitchens. There was Dulji—not the scrubbed and polished "Maharaj" who had paid his

respects at our wedding, but a working Dulji, barefooted and bareheaded, with the sacred thread of the twice-born Hindu looped conveniently over one ear. He bowed and smiled: "Maharaj." I returned his greeting, "Maharaj." My glance was quite unwittingly held by the smile-contorted caste mark on his forehead. A reassuring chair appeared, and I sat down to have my first lesson in Indian cooking.

Dulji began straightway with his toes. He pointed to the strings fastened around the largest on each foot. I must have looked a complete blank, for in no time the entire kitchen staff was clustered solicitously about our linguistic impasse. (Anyone who has ever been in the East will know that it takes exactly two seconds for a capacity crowd to collect around the most trivial incident.) There was a hasty conference during which heads wagged and hands flew about, until finally Raja Ram, the meat cook, understood the confusion. In grave Hindi-English, he gave me to understand that these strings were tied on the big toes to prevent evil spirits from entering the cook's stomach

"A hereditary cook should be vigilant, well versed in science, clean, devoted, and possessed of the auspicious bodily marks."
(Ksema Kutahala)

and hence invading our food. I appreciated this gesture, having already encountered some of those evil spirits in less well-protected kitchens.

We moved on to the spice box. My mentor lifted the lid almost reverently, and I peered in. Turmeric, anise, cumin, cloves, cardamom—these I recognized. There were others too, in all manner of hues and textures. Feeling too shy to ask, I cast a furtive eye about for curry powder and mango chutney, but without success.

The lid dropped back, and we moved on to Dulji's most special cupboard. Therein lay bottles of rose-water, vials of musk, saffron, and clarified butter—an uncharted jungle of oils and essences. Far back in the corner, there was also some salt. I greeted it with relief, an old friend. My determination to learn the innermost secrets of palace cooking was beginning to falter in the face of this exotic unfamiliarity.

To bolster my courage, I pressed Dulji to begin quickly with my lessons. He sighed. This overanxiousness only showed that I had not yet attuned myself to the rhythm of living in Mother India. Nothing happens in a hurry. While I had tea and he saw to his utensils, he explained to me that before going further I must learn something of the logic of Indian cooking, and—more important—of the illogic, the soul that pervades it all. It was obvious that I would have to go back upstairs and search out an English-speaking pandit, or wise man, knowledgeable on the subject.

The gentleman ideally suited to the task proved to be, in fact, a pandit by birth and caste. Shastriji is the sole survivor of fifty-six wise men once maintained by Indore State for counsel and advice. Like Dulji, Pandit Shastri is a Brahmin of the very old school; indeed, his heart reposes forever in the past. For him a man is not merely a man but the tip end of his ancestral line, responsible while on earth for the entire length of the chain.

Fortunately, Shastriji approves of my husband's chain of

ancestors. "Your great-grandfather"—his face begins to work furiously—"ate to fight!" Glancing at our modest tea morsels, he continues, "That man not only lifted a forty-pound sword every day, but he also plunged it into the enemy!" Shastriji sinks back into his chair and eyes my husband, who, weighing one hundred and forty pounds and considering himself wiry, rapidly changes the subject.

But Shastriji is not so easily dissuaded. "What do people know of eating today? Five minutes in the pan, one second on the tongue, and then, finished! Down it goes to the, to the . . . um, liver! Why, in the good old days, they knew there was more to eating than this. No cook would ever have prepared a dish without considering the particular climate, the time of day, and the nature of the person who was to eat it. Was he choleric, bilious, or phlegmatic? Did he have to fight, or was he older and ready for the contemplative life? You must think about these things! You people of today do not consider the soul when you think of food. Why, eating is the *summum bonum* of life."

Pandit Shastri is often given to proclaiming the *summum bonum,* but I understood his point this time. And when, afterwards, I heard a curious culinary tale concerning a recently departed ancestor of our house, I understood why he had spoken with a hint of indignation. It seems that a certain late Highness of our State, not unfond of food himself, came under the sway of a holy sage of unquestionable reputation (all holy sages in India being of unquestionable reputation). The learned man advised him of a foolproof method for filling his coffers with gold. Accordingly he procured a succulent wild boar, his favourite dish, and prepared it for the fire. The stomach of the hapless beast was filled by his own hand with the purest mercury. Not without a certain wistfulness, His Late Highness looked on as the boar was reduced over sandalwood coals first to melting tenderness, then to mouth-watering crispness, and finally—while the maharaja controlled himself admirably—to a state of purest . . . (Purest what, I have

never learned or ever dared to ask. It seemed to be one of those cases when, as Forster astutely noted, "the very asking of certain questions in India makes them dissolve into something and then into something else.")

I had better luck with my questions in the kitchen. Having completed upstairs my basic lessons in the "suchness of things," I was readily welcomed on subsequent visits downstairs and soon became an accepted member of the kitchen crew (blessedly exempt from doing dishes). I have never quite overcome, however, certain vagaries of method, which I have at last put down to the mysterious and undefinable quality of Indian food.

For example, the measurement of spices simply does not translate. My cooks instruct me in such thought-provoking quantities as "one pea's-worth of asafoetida" and "one cigarette box of roasted cumin" (regular or king size?). I had worse luck still in pinning down the motive for certain inviolate techniques. Questioning the meat cook about his rationale for adding a particular amount of water at a particular time, I was told, "Wah! Otherwise, the meat would not understand!"

And the matter of why the lovely brass and bell-metal pots and pans of India have for centuries had no handles remains a mystery to me. In every other respect, however, the shape and design of these utensils are quite sensible and even ingenious. Preparation of Indian food involves much cooking in small quantities of clarified butter or oil; thus meats are browned, vegetables crisped, and ground spices simmered to blend. Ideally suited for the purpose are the heavy, concave bottoms of these pots and pans. Sides are of various designs: straight for rice pulḷaos; hemispherical for sweets and fried breads; and for vegetables or slow-cooking meats, curved gracefully like an inverted dome. Even the lids are concave, so that hot water or coals can be placed on top of the pot to help maintain heat and moisture inside. Nothing could be more practical than

this lidded pot when an unripe pullao must be sealed with dough and left to mature over the merest breath of a fire.

Cooking Techniques

Indian cooking has few of the intricacies of the French: binding, glazing, barding, and larding are practically unknown. Most of the meat is either boiled, fried, or steamed. Taste and texture are a direct result of the spices chosen to cook with the meat. One technique, however, is uniquely Indian and rivals that of any other cuisine for the skill and attention it requires. That is the *bhunao*—the cooking method for which the round-bottomed pot is ideally suited.

Cold-blooded description of the *bhunao* is almost a crime. One must begin in the Eastern manner with the inextricable elements of love and finesse. Only thus initiated is one ready to attempt this unique art—teasing the meat-and-spice mixture in minute quantities of fat over an insistently high fire. The trick is to have a minimum of fat and a highly refined feeling for the nature of the dish. Just as the meat is about to stick and burn, a deft hand must add just enough water, broth, or yogurt to avoid disaster, and go on thus—juggling the mixture between frying and boiling—until it reaches a perfect rapport, the height of both flavour and tenderness. It is not a technique for the indifferent cook.

Less exacting, but also quite effective, is the Indian method of adding flavours to a dish immediately before serving. A small quantity of clarified butter is heated just to smoking. The cook (who must be nimble) tosses in an array of whole spices—perhaps cinnamon, cloves, and black pepper. Dodging the angry fat, he rushes the lid soundly into place and immediately retreats. Safely out of range, he waits for the spices to surrender their goodness, darting back a few seconds later, just in time to save them from

burning. The butter, thus ennobled, is then strained and tossed into the dish. This is called the *baghar*.

Such techniques were unfamiliar to me, but they were all fairly straightforward. I mastered them in time—and Dulji was patient. He endured all my questions and even such sacrilege as electric blenders and accurate measuring spoons. But there was one point upon which he refused to elaborate: the matter of the strings. Being unfamiliar with conditions abroad, he probably mistrusted foreign demons; for he refused to specify the exact type of string and the manner of encircling the toe.

Philosophy of Indian Food

Which brings me back to mystery and the "suchness of things." This took me much longer to grasp than techniques. With Shastriji's help, I have come a long way and am convinced that such knowledge enhances the food. But I am still unable to express what I know; it is better if my teacher himself speaks. There are a number of topics Shastriji discussed with me (perhaps discussed is not the best word; I did a lot of pure listening). Being a Brahmin pandit means above all one thing: prodigious memory. Brahmins can recite from memory for hours. And hours and hours and hours.

Shastriji discoursed on the following subjects before I was ever allowed in the kitchen: The Nature of a Being and His Food ("You can't cook without knowing this!"); also, Food and the Time of the Year, and Food and the Stages of Life. The seasons of the year are particularly important. (He will quote from impressive texts. When Shastriji quotes from an original Sanskrit text, not a nuance is modified. All of it—every word—is chanted in English, while his hands keep a gentle rhythm.) After the seasons and the stages of life come Characteristics of the Cook and the Kitchen with their classical, elaborate rules. Shastriji is a Hindu, but a broad-minded man,

understanding both Hindus and Muslims. There are a number of differences between one cuisine and the other—quite a large number, as he will explain.

The Sequence of the Meal and the Properties of Foods are the final topics to be discussed. If Shastriji feels the need for refreshment, he will assemble a *paan* before continuing. From some pocket deep in the folds of his gown, he will bring forth a well-worn box. Carefully, deliberately, he will lay out its contents, the lecture temporarily forgotten. Only when the seasoned betel leaf is tucked in his mouth will he again give you his full attention. Remember that the properties of this betel leaf (*paan*) have been considered for their inherent values. He will tell you about the importance of temperature while his *paan* is "cooling," and finally about the sequence of an Indian meal. Even Shastriji will be unable to cover the subject there; the sequence varies all over India. "But the *paan,*" he will conclude, "is the *summum bonum* of the meal. You will always find it served at the end!"

Before putting you in the hands of the pandit, I should interject a word from Dulji, who suggests—discreetly as ever, but quite firmly—that the excellent ladies and gentlemen who read this book consider well what they are undertaking. To cook an Indian meal is no simple affair. (Dulji spends hours with assistants!) Do not give up, but proceed with a certain caution. If you want to enjoy it, prepare Indian food in stages and in moderation. One dish—perhaps a main course—will suffice for a start. Serve it with something familiar. Organization, as Shastriji says, is the key to serenity. Without serenity there can be no success. Always prepare and arrange ingredients before actually beginning to cook.

I shall now leave you to Shastriji. Good luck with the lessons, and don't forget your strings in the kitchen. . . .

The Nature of a Being and His Food

Tamas, Rajas, and Sattwas, the Three Basic Qualities

The essence of the world and all that is in it is composed of these three qualities: *Tamashika, Rajashika,* and the saintly *Sattvika.* This is a subject close to Shastriji's heart. "In every food," he says, "in every man, and in every maharaja, one of these qualities predominates and determines the nature of the being."

Tamashika is the dark nature.

A man of such a nature is characterized by shortness and corpulence, despondency, stupidity, impiety. He is prone to stupefaction, perversity of the intellect, and lethargy in action. In short, a highly disagreeable being.

Such a man takes food which is putrid and stale. Worse, it is cold and flat . . . made up of the leavings of others. He eats pork and beef, eels and turnips. Strong spirits and dark grains can tempt him. Things such as garlic and onion—being shaped like the head—were forbidden to

some orthodox Hindu; but Tamashika eats them with impunity. ["Pity his cook," says the pandit.]

Rajashika is the passionate nature.

The *Rajashika* man has feelings of much pain and misery; he had a roving spirit as well as an overweening confidence in his own excellence. Tall, muscular, passionate, he is full of physical energy. But thanks to his nature he is prone to the following: vanity, pride, lust—and on top of that, anger and hilarity. [Shastriji clucks in disapproval but continues.]

Rajashika's food is bitter and sour; it is saline, pungent, and astringent as well. Included in his diet are mutton and fish, and also poultry and game.

Sattvika is the well-balanced nature.

The *Sattvika* man is characterized by medium height, a fine and slender body, a judicious regimen of diet, longevity, and a strong belief in God, a good retentive memory [Shastriji smiles in satisfaction at this], and the performance of good deeds regardless of consequences. He is prone to forbearance, truthfulness, intellect, understanding, and courage . . . and so on, and so on, et cetera.

His food is, of course, agreeable and bland: milk, yogurt,

"A person should eat in accordance with his natural fires, after decorating himself and entering the dining pavilion." (Ksema Kutuhala)

clarified butter, wheat, fruits and vegetables without heaviness. Spinach, lentils, lotus, and mangoes.

Munching on a mango, Shastriji concludes the introductory portion of his lecture. And continues to the Time of the Year.

The Time of the Year and Food

Fortunately, no man's nature is pure *tamas, rajas,* or *sattwas.* According to Shastriji, these qualities alone will rarely determine a diet. In choosing his food, man must also consider his age, his vocation, and the time of the year. Here we must settle back and listen carefully; this part is not so simple. According to the ancients, there are five seasons: rainy, autumn, winter, spring, and summer. During each season certain flavours are beneficial and others are to be scrupulously avoided. Spectacles in place, our Shastriji will elaborate upon this topic by quoting from "appropriate sources." (He refuses to be more spe-

cific, but I have investigated on my own: his source is *Sushruta Samhita,* a medical text written between the fourth and second centuries B.C. in a style unique to the period.)

First, the rainy season:

Herbs and vegetables are newly grown, overjuicy, and difficult to digest. A wise man should, therefore, avoid that which might lead to indigestion: excessive physical exercise, water, dew, sexual intercourse, and the sun's rays. One should lie upon some higher place to avoid the cold damp caused by the seasonal emission of earthly vapours. When feeling cold, one should protect oneself with warm clothes and lie inside a room free from blasts of wind, in which a fire is kept burning. Fine unguents should be used as pastes and elephants as conveyances in this season. One should sleep during the day, and eating before the previous meal has been digested should be strictly avoided. Sandal paste with saffron and mixed with musk is an excellent unguent, being neither warm nor cool, and it is prescribed for the rainy season. The wise man will seek out salty, sour food to counterbalance the effects of the rains.

Next is the autumn season.

All kinds of water are recommended in the autumn season, as they are now clear and pure, washed as they are by the clear white rays of the autumnal moon and purified by the rising of the seer's star. Immersion in ponds full of lotus and water lilies, enjoying the moon's rays at dusk, and the use of sandal pastes are all recommended. One should drink sweet, cold water and purified wine as transparent as crystal. Clean and thin clothes, scented with sandal paste or with camphor, as well as garlands of autumnal flowers should be worn. All these measures should be taken to subdue bodily heat. The wise man will seek out sweet flavours during this season.

It would be wise to pause at this point for a lotus or a mango. Winter and spring are long.

The winter season follows.

The winter season is cold but dry. The sun is weak and the atmosphere is very airy, hence the bodily winds are aggravated at this time. The abdominal fire becomes dull owing to the internal cold and dries up the bodily fluids. The use of oleaginous substances is, therefore, beneficial in this season. Food should not be taken cold. Hot, potent drinks such as strong wine should be taken after pasting the body all over with unguents. Baths should be taken in tepid water after rubbing oil all over the body. Large inner apartments, completely surrounded by rooms on all sides and containing fire pots, should be used as bedrooms, and the bedsheets should be silken. Sufficiently warm coverings for the body should be used. Kings and kinglike personages should lie within the sweet embrace of maidens with big breasts and thighs scented with the fumes of unguents. They can, in this season, enjoy the sexual pleasures to their hearts' content, and should take proper, soothing food. Sweet, bitter, pungent, acid, and saline articles of food as well as sesame, pulses, potherbs, yogurt, different clear, transparent wines, and all other invigorating articles of diet should be used at the advent of the cold season by a person wishing vigour of the body and mind.

Now the spring season. (Shastriji clears his throat. Ancient texts are uncomfortably heavy.)

The bodily phlegm, stored in the organism owing to the coldness of the body during the winter season, is aggravated during the spring by the heat of the sun, and gives rise to many diseases. Acid, sweet, and saline articles of food and drink, as well as those that are heavy of digestion, should be avoided, and recourse should be had to vomiting. Rice,

barley, and pulses should be duly prescribed after the cold season is finished. One should have recourse to physical exercise, such as mock fights, strolls, or throwing of stones. Coal-black pastes should be applied to the eyes, strong smoke inhaled, and strong gargles used in the spring. Everything should be taken with tepid water, and a diet consisting of pungent, alkaline, astringent, tepid, and non-liquid articles—especially the preparations of barley, pulse, and honey—is beneficial at this time. Massage and baths should be had, and mango groves should be resorted to. The sexual pleasures may be enjoyed in this season. Day sleep, sweet, and liquid articles of fare, as well as those hard to digest, should be strictly avoided during this season.

The summer season and it's over.

During the summer season, physical exercise, toil, hot and excessively drying articles of fare—those prepared of pulses —as well as those abounding in heat-producing tastes—pungent, acid, and saline—should be avoided. Large tanks, lakes, and rivers, as well as charming gardens and cold rooms should be resorted to. The finest refreshing sandal pastes, garlands of lotuses and lilies, necklaces of pearls and precious stones, and light clothes should be worn. Sweet-scented and cooling drinks, prepared with abundance of sugar, should be taken. Sweet, cold, liquid food, mixed with clarified butter, and boiled milk sweetened with sugar are found tasteful and beneficial when taken at night-time. One should in the summer lie on a bed strewn over with fresh and full-blown flowers in some palatial building with one's body besmeared with sandal paste and refreshed by cooling breezes from palm leaf fans.

The Stages of Life and Food

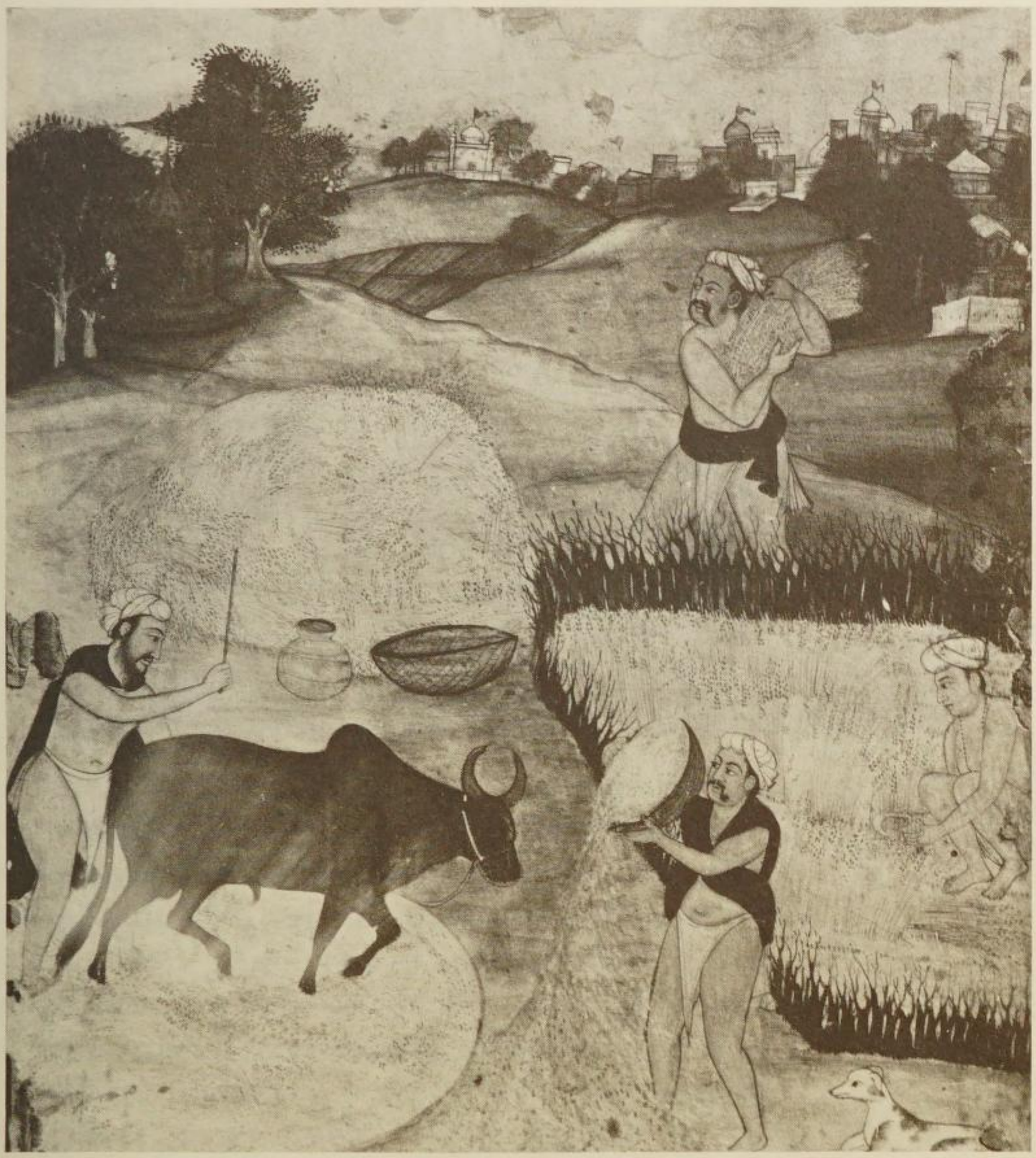
Shastriji is particularly fond of what follows: The Stages of Life as they bear upon cuisine and a basic knowledge of nourishment. He is often heard to say, with a certain

modest pride, that he has experienced all three—student
householder, and contemplative—each an important stage

As a student, a man must learn humility and beg what
ever food he may require. Like the widow or ascetic, he
eschews foods that might stimulate or possibly excite. Sal
and honey, meat and wines he must avoid, as well as the
entire range of pungent condiments. Living chiefly on
white rice and simple gruel, he must labour most intensely
and devoutly.

When his years are full of children and home and work
are his chief concern, a man is called householder and is
much in need of strength. He may take everything within
his means to stay his hunger, letting balance be his constant

Students must avoid
stimulating food.



guide. Wisely he takes each day but two meals, counting thirty-two mouthfuls for himself, sixteen for his wife. One-half of his stomach he will fill with solid food, one-quarter with things cooling and liquid. The final quarter he refrains from filling, leaving space there for the movement of the winds. [Shastriji, when pressed, will admit that sixteen mouthfuls is insufficient for a wife. But he goes on very quickly to the subject of old age, fearing I may also question his thirty-two.]

"One who sleeps once a day and eats twice lives for a hundred years." (Ksema Kutuhala)

When old age approaches, sons and daughters bear his cares, and a man is free to contemplate at leisure. His needs are few, his food austere; eight simple mouthfuls once a day suffice. Leaves and flowers, fresh-cut vegetables and barley boiled in water now and then . . . this satisfies him, keeps him pure, until in time he reaches his hundred years.

According to a Hindu, to reach one's hundred years is a metaphor for starting the next life. There are other ways to say it, but Shastriji is tired. We must move on to The Cook and The Kitchen.

Characteristics of the Cook

At this point, Shastriji cannot refrain from rising to his feet. As an old and trusted retainer of a Princely State, he is naturally moved by what is to follow. Characteristics of the cook are none too different from those he has come to admire in certain venerable personages very well known

to himself. These characteristics must be recited with respect.

A cook is born in his own country, intelligent, possessed of the auspicious bodily marks (the barley grain, fish, lotus, and pitcher), has good conduct, and is born in a reputable family.

He is calm, controlled, generous, fit to be honoured by the king, and has a pure smile. He is devoted to his own wife, is pure of thought, and does not lust after another's wife.

He is of measured words, kind, charitable, has a knowledge of metals, seasons, and the conditions of men according to their age.

Before cooking he washes his feet and hands and performs the purifying rites. He knows the auspicious hour for the dinner of the king.

Knowing the program of the king, he arranges to offer him the appropriate dishes. Likewise he is aware of the king's special diet and serves those special dishes in their proper order.

For once, Shastri confides to me the source of his material: an old cookbook from the fifth century A.D., written by Nal, a famous legendary king. We shall hear more of Nal's *Pak Shastra,* but for now we must continue to that all-important, oft-neglected subject: the Kitchen. There is very little difference, stresses Shastri, between the Indian kitchen of today and that which we call a classical kitchen. "Why, one can see that the following recommendations, which are—um—several hundred years old, are still in practice today. . . ."

The Kitchen

The kitchen should be set up in the southeast part of the house, which will also be the place of eating activity. ["Southeast, you see?" Shastri smiles. "The direction of Benares, a wonderful, sacred city! I spent some of my

از جهت ملاحظهٔ خارهائی تنگ وجاهای مخاطره نکشم خواجه فی الحال خجالت کرد
آنچه او گفته بود گفت روز پگاه شده بود در راه هم دور بود شوانیتیم رفت درین

happiest years there . . . in an . . . um . . . ah . . . academic capacity."] This area should be made fragrant by sandalwood and should be inaccessible to enemies even in their dreams.

It should contain a window and a doorway fitted with a net. One-half the portion of the walls should be plastered. The fireplace should be well prepared, extending from east to west.

Foods cooked in vessels made of clay, rinsed with water, are of good quality and approved by all.

If, in the absence of clay vessels, iron vessels are used, the eyes are affected by hemorrhoids.

Whatever is cooked in vessels made of brass is wholesome, conducive to mental strength, and pure.

In the palaces of kings, food should be cooked in vessels of gold and silver. Such vessels remove all the injurious qualities of food, and food prepared therein leads particularly to delight. ["Do you begin to see why a cook should have excellent knowledge of metals?"]

Rice, once put in its cooking vessel, should not be transferred to another vessel. Clarified butter is to be kept in a wooden vessel. Cooked starchy food is to be kept in a vessel made of wood, stone, or iron; whereas drinks prepared with rice and milk or buttermilk should be kept only in earthen vessels. Coloured sugar candy should always be put in vessels made of glass or crystal decorated with lapis lazuli.

What is laid down above should always be adhered to. This will always lead to happiness, will be agreeable, and will not leave any deformity.

All things useful for meals and of good quality should be kept in the kitchen time and again.

I should like to insert here, while Shastriji consults his notes, that I have found the following things to be all I require in my own kitchen for preparing excellent Indian

The kitchens of Emperor Akbar
in the sixteenth century.

food. Above all, two things: a good blender and heavy-bottomed pots, especially a medium-sized casserole that can be tightly lidded and is attractive for serving. Teflon skillets are perfect for frying (and for cleaning up), but a wok, if you can get one, saves much oil and really gives better results. One or two spatulas are better for stirring meat than a spoon and you will need a rubber spatula for the blender. A long-handled fork for stirring the rice (never stir with a spoon!). A strainer for draining yogurt and rice. Cheesecloth, also for draining the yogurt and for tying up bags of spices. Good chopping and paring knives, as in any well-equipped kitchen; perhaps a wooden mallet for splitting coconuts and bruising the spices in their bags. A sturdy grater and a little rolling pin, if you are adventurous enough to make breads. Lastly, a spice rack protected from light that will keep things as airtight as possible.

These are the basics, but there are a few extra things for the more serious Indian cook. I keep as many of my spices as possible stored in their unground form. Just before using them, I grind the necessary amount in an adjustable coffee grinder, set to extra fine. I never use this same grinder for coffee, as the flavour of the spices lingers. I also keep a tiny marble mortar and pestle solely for muddling saffron. Some people prefer a large mortar for grinding their spice or *masala* pastes; I find the blender gives satisfactory results for less effort. There is an inexpensive little hand grinder for those who do not have a blender: the French Amour brand *mouli* grinder (meant for parsley, mint, or boiled eggs) easily grinds small quantities of garlic, ginger, onion, et cetera, so that they have only to be briefly pounded in a mortar to achieve the right consistency for *masala* paste. Good freezer packaging is handy to have, since most meat dishes freeze very well. Also one or two Tupperware lidded bowls. I keep quantities of clarified butter in one (it is easier to make in large batches). In the other, I keep peeled garlic. There is no need to keep

peeled garlic on hand unless you use it quite often. But should you ever need to peel a lot at a time, place the bulb of very fresh garlic in a strong plastic bag. Seal the bag and rub it strongly between your palms. In a short while, each individual bud will be peeled. Finally, I have a set of natural earthenware bowls and wooden serving trays. Indian food has such an earthy quality, I feel it looks best in very simple surroundings. I hope Shastriji does not hear my advice; he is of the old silver school. Having not only interrupted but also contradicted him, I must now humbly return to my seat as he continues reciting the equipment necessary in the classical Indian kitchen.

The broomsticks—used by female servants and made from the tails of horses—polishing cloths, bamboo pots, and water tanks should always be on hand, as also a stone for producing fire, a spade, a small ax, and fuel, which is pieces of pure wood measuring as long as the hand.

The following things should not be worn out, or very big, and they should be free from germs: a strainer, a sieve, a wooden board for sitting, a mortar and pestle, a winnowing fan, a clod of earth, a stone, a square wooden plate, a pair of tongs, four pieces of cloth, a tube through which to blow the fire, a knife, a rope, a frying pan, and a long iron rod for moving the embers. Such are the things that are proper for a kitchen.

"There, you see," said Shastriji, "it reads like a description of my very own kitchen; although the reference here is . . . let me see, the reference here is *Ksema Kutuhala,* a Hindu cookery book of the second century A.D. Now kindly compare it with the following account from the sixteenth century. The kitchen is a Muslim kitchen, and the Emperor in question is Akbar the Great, who ruled over much of India in great wisdom. He was blessed with an excellent fellow—you might call him a Muslim pandit—who took note of every aspect of his reign. It was all collected in

the *Ain-i-Akbar,* including this portion of the Imperial Kitchen:"

His Majesty extends his attention even to this department and has given many wise regulations for it; nor can a reason be given why he should not do so, as the equilibrium of man's nature, the strength of the body, the capability of receiving external and internal blessings, and the acquisition of worldly and religious advantages, depend ultimately on proper care being shown for appropriate food. This knowledge distinguishes man from beasts, with whom, as far as mere eating is concerned, he stands upon the same level. If His Majesty did not possess so lofty a mind, so comprehensive an understanding, so universal a kindness, he would have chosen the path of solitude, and given up sleep and food altogether; and even now, when he has taken upon himself the temporal and spiritual leadership of the people, the question, "What dinner has been prepared today?" never passes over his tongue. In the course of twenty-four hours, His Majesty eats but once, and leaves off before he is fully satisfied; neither is there any fixed time for this meal, but the servants have always things so far ready that in the space of an hour, after the order has been given, a hundred dishes are served up. The food allowed to the women of the seraglio commences to be taken from the kitchen in the morning, and goes on till night.

Trustworthy and experienced people are appointed to this department; and all good servants attached to the court are resolved to perform well whatever service they have undertaken. Their head is assisted by the Prime Minister himself. His Majesty has entrusted to the latter the affairs of the State, but especially this important department. Notwithstanding all this, His Majesty is not unmindful of the conduct of the servants. He appoints a zealous and sincere man as Mir Bakawal, or Master of the Kitchen, upon whose insight the success of the department

A classical Hindu kitchen.

depends, and gives him several upright persons as assistants. There are also treasurers for the cash and the stores, several tasters, and a clever writer. Cooks from all countries prepare a great variety of dishes of all kinds of grains, greens, meats; also oily, sweet, and spicy dishes. Every day such dishes are prepared as the nobles can scarcely command at their feasts, from which you may infer how exquisite the dishes are which are prepared for His Majesty.

"I cannot refrain from interrupting here for just a moment," Shastriji said, "to note one or two important similarities between this description of a Muslim kitchen and what we have learned of Hindu theories. Notice the attention to 'the equilibrium of man's nature, the strength of the body. . . .' And to the mature ruler's 'eating but once in the course of the day and leaving off before he is fully satisfied.' Be aware that what follows bears a resemblance as well: the various preparations—oily, sweet—the various rices, and various metals. Very similar indeed. Also Muslims follow the same preparations against uncleanliness as do Hindus and, like Hindus, set aside the first morsels of each meal as symbolic tithe for the holy."

In the beginning of the year, the subtreasurers make out an annual estimate, and receive the amount; the money bags and the door of the storehouse being sealed with the seals of the Mir Bakawal and the Writer; and every month a corrected statement of the daily expenditure is drawn up, the receipt for which is sealed by the same two officers, when it is entered under the head of the expenditure. At the beginning of every quarter, the Mir Bakawal collects whatever he thinks will be necessary: Sukhdas rice from Bharaij, Dewzira rice from Gwalior, Jinjin rice from Rajori and Nimlah, clarified butter from Hisar Firuza; ducks, waterfowls, and certain vegetables from Kashmir. Patterns are always kept. The sheep, goats, barbaries, fowls,

ducks, et cetera, are fattened by the cooks; fowls are never kept less than a month, the slaughterhouse is without the city or the camp, in the neighbourhood of rivers and tanks, where the meat is washed, when it is sent to the kitchen in sacks sealed by the cooks. There it is again washed, and thrown into the pots. The water carriers pour the water out of their leather bags into earthen vessels, the mouths of which are covered with pieces of cloth and sealed up; and the water is left to settle before it is used. A place is also told off as a kitchen garden that there may be continual supply of fresh greens. The Mir Bakawal and the clerk determine the price of every eatable, which becomes a fixed rule; and they sign the daybook, the estimates, the receipts for transfers, the list of wages of the servants, et cetera, and watch every transaction. Bad characters, idle talkers, unknown persons are never employed; no one is entertained without a personal security, nor is personal acquaintance sufficient.

The victuals are served up in dishes of gold and silver, stone and earthenware; some of the dishes being in charge of each of the Bakawal's assistants. During the time of cooking and when the victuals are taken out, an awning is spread, and onlookers are kept away. The cooks tuck up their sleeves, and the hems of their garments, and hold their hands before their mouths and noses when the food is taken out; the cook and the Bakawal taste it, after which it is tasted by the Mir Bakawal, and then put into the dishes. The gold and silver dishes are tied up in red cloths, and those of copper and china in white ones. The Mir Bakawal attaches his seal, and writes on it the names of the contents, while the clerk of the pantry writes out on a sheet of paper a list of all vessels and dishes, which he sends inside, with the seal of the Mir Bakawal, so that none of the dishes may be changed. The dishes are carried by the Bakawals, the cooks, and the other servants, and mace-bearers precede and follow, to prevent people from approaching them. The servants of the pantry send at the

same time, in bags containing the seal of the Bakawal, various kinds of bread, saucers of curds piled up, and small stands containing plates of pickles, fresh ginger, limes, and various greens. The servants of the palace again taste the food, spread the tablecloth on the ground, and arrange the dishes; and when after some time His Majesty commences to dine, the table servants sit opposite him in attendance; first the share of the dervishes is put apart, then His Majesty commences with milk or curds. After he has dined, he prostrates himself in prayer. The Mir Bakawal is always in attendance. The dishes are taken away according to the above list. Some victuals are also kept half ready, should they be called for.

"There," Shastriji concludes. "That is the sixteenth century; rather elaborate, don't you think? The Mughal court was very concerned with show. Mind you, their dishes are excellent. First class. They are almost entirely responsible for a good deal of Indian cuisine as we know it today; all the fancy saffron and almonds and cream. O yes! Yes, and the pullaos. The pullaos with rice and cinnamon and sometimes fruits and. . . . I now intend to recite to you a brief excerpt from the second-century cookbook, *Ksema Kutuhala,* illustrating the fine, simple, edifying diet of a Hindu kingly personage of that time; with particular emphasis upon the order and types of dishes commonly served at a Hindu meal. . . ."

The Sequence of the Meal

Before eating, the King should have bathed and put on well-washed, soft, lovely, and bright clothing. At the time of taking food, his feet should be washed.

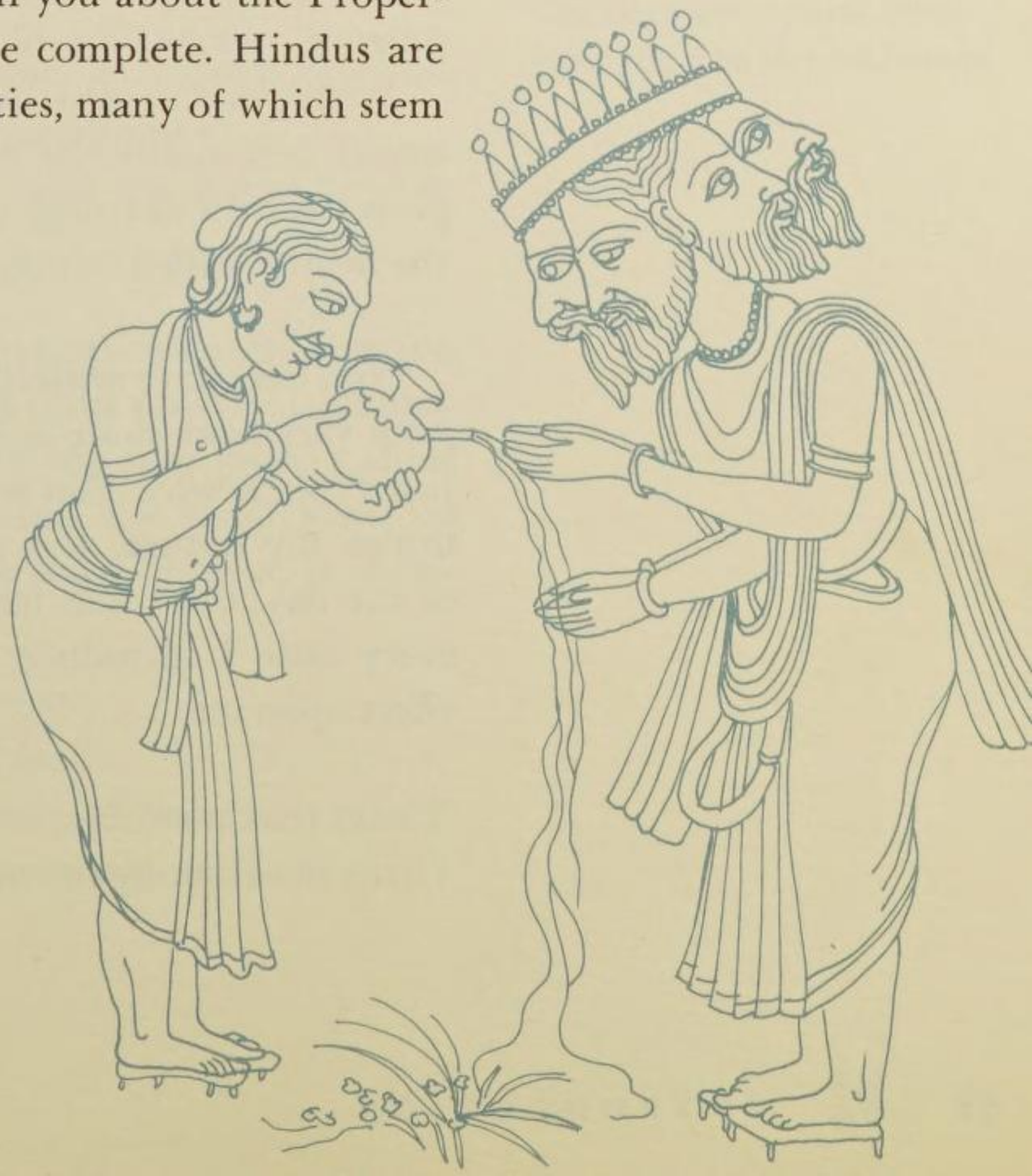
He should enter the place of taking food together with sons and friends, wearing garlands and possessing a joyous heart. Having performed the rites, possessing a saintly attitude, having worshiped gods and manes, he should have a look at auspicious things. In this world there are eight

auspicious objects: Brahmin, cow, fire, gold, clarified butter, sun, water, and king. Thereafter he may eat, assured of longevity.

O King, consider the following to be important food stuffs: rice, soup, clarified butter, firm vegetables, soft vegetables, meat with vegetables, pure starchy food, sweetmeats with beverages and boiled milk.

In the beginning, one should take sweets, then sour things in the middle and sea salt with a mixture of ginger, black pepper, and cloves in the end ["These are known as *garam masala,* the 'heating spices' "], so also pungent things. O King, if you long for a happy result, give up the company of people while eating. Never give up eating for the sake of company.

Shastri elaborates: "When you reach the sacred city of Benares in your studies, you will learn that the five edibles sacred to an orthodox Hindu are all products of the sacred cow: milk, clarified butter, yogurt . . . but we are getting ahead of ourselves—when we have almost completed the basics. I have now to tell you about the Properties of Food and the lesson will be complete. Hindus are very particular about these properties, many of which stem from our Ayurvedic thought."



The Properties of Food

The wise cook will know that the properties of food are as follows: smell, texture, temperature, colour, and taste. There are six recognized basic tastes:

Sweet: a taste that is pleasant, proves comfortable to man, and contributes toward his life preservation; that keeps his mouth moist and increases the amount of bodily phlegm is called sweet. ["In Benares they say, 'A life is well lost that is lost in gorging sweets.' "]

Saline: A taste that imparts a greater relish to food, produces salivation, and stimulates digestion is called saline. Saline foods, taken in excess, give headache and cause convulsions.

Acid: A taste that produces tooth-edge and increased salivation and heightens the relish of food is called acid. ["Ruined is the man who eats acids and the woman who eats sweets."]

Pungent: A taste that produces a burning sensation at the tip of the tongue, accompanied by a tingling of that part, and which is instantaneously followed by a running at the nose, is called pungent. When used in excess, it causes headache; when used in moderation, it lessens corpulence, purifies the blood, and clears the sinus.

Astringent: A taste that brings about the dryness of the mouth and numbs the palate, that obstructs the throat and gives rise to a drawing, pressing sensation in the region of the heart is called astringent.

"You may have noticed that the contents of my betel-leaf *paan* vary from hour to hour and from day to day. I shall just explain why. You see, I am always considering everything: my nature, the particular temperature and time of the day, the condition of my body at that time. Why, every taste I introduce into my mouth has a particular effect upon me. . . ."

Tastes that are sweet, acid, or saline are endowed with the virtue of subduing nervous energy.

Noblemen of Indore presenting ceremonial betel-leaf *paan* to the Maharaja.

Tastes that are sweet, bitter, and astringent have the powers of subduing a deranged metabolism.

Tastes that are pungent, bitter, and astringent tend to reduce excess phlegm in the body.

"Now. Our classical scholars, after serious consideration of the matter, have recognized sixty-three possible combinations of these six basic flavours. To the sum total of these sixty-three flavours, they have given the same name as that of the Supreme Soul: Brahma. Brahma is food; Brahma is God. . . .

> Verily, they obtain all food
> who worship Brahma as food.
> For truly food is the chief of beings.
> Therefore it is called a panacea.

"That is from our Upanishads, the Taittiriya Upanishad. There are holy men amongst us even today who can experience all sixty-three flavours simply by meditating until the bodily forces rise to a certain portion of the brain. They exist on such nourishment, nothing else; Brahma is food, Brahma is God. . . .

"No doubt these holy men will try to experience cooling flavours . . . but I have neglected to explain temperature! Briefly then (I am running out of *paan*), every food has a temperature. Aside from a taste, a texture, and a colour, a food can be heating or cooling. Aha! I know. You will immediately think that a chili pepper is heating. That is your mistake. Heating means neither the physical temperature of the food nor the effect that it has upon your good tongue. O no! Heating, or cooling, means the ultimate effect that ingestion of that particular article of fare has upon your bodily system. Thus dates and nuts are heating, citrus fruits cooling. Radishes, cauliflower, onions, garlic are all heating. Yes, heating! Spinach, beets, and tomatoes are cooling. It is so for everything we eat. Tea and alcohols heating. Coffee, wine, and beer cooling. Strange, no? Meats are almost all heating (so I am told, being a strict vegetarian). Only brain and fish are considered cooling (other nations include beef and veal). Amongst dairy products, butter, cream, and eggs will heat the body; blessed milk, yogurt, buttermilk, and natural cheese are cooling and soothing to the body. I could go on a bit; but you are eager to get to the kitchen.

"Go then; I shall have just one more little *paan* while you penetrate the depths of the palace. . . ."

After I left Shastriji, I went directly to the kitchen—and I studied there for many months. During those months I saw theory in practice; my pandit was a realist after all. As much as I had been entranced by his recitations, I had doubted their relevance to recipes—especially those of a royal kitchen. But I came to learn that cooks and kings

were indeed very closely connected. I saw in my own, and in many other palaces, how the diet really is considered instinctively in the light of all the things I had learned.

With my husband, I travelled over much of India, visiting palaces and palace kitchens. It was a voyage in time and history as well; every voyage in India is. A princely family—as Shastriji would say—is the tip end of an ancestral chain. That chain has now been severed. Traditions have begun to disappear daily and with them a way of life. It is inevitable that the maharaja's style of eating must also change.

The chapters that follow will cover only a few of the more than five hundred former Princely States, from northern Kashmir to southernmost Travancore. Some of the recipes have come from the Maharaja of Sailana, to whom we have gratefully dedicated this book. Virgin Chicken (*Sufaid Maz*) in the Jaipur chapter, for example, was brought to perfection in Sailana, as were Desert Spareribs (*Bhanslas*) from Bikaner, Shah Jehan's Last Stew (*Shah Jehani Korma*) in the Mughal chapter, and two Hyderabad recipes, Founder's Feast (*Kaliya Asaf Jah*) and the Edible Edifice (*Dahi Pullao*). I have tried to place them in the regions of their origin, but Sailana was their finishing school.

Royal recipes are not always freely shared—especially by the cooks themselves! Almost always one or two ingredients will be left out in the telling or some distracting extra included. In our travels we must have encountered almost every sort of subterfuge: important ingredients concealed in a sleeve and added while our backs were turned, keys to That Special Cupboard mysteriously misplaced, weights and measures a bit suspicious (two cups of turmeric?!). No one meant any harm by this; it was an expected form of loyalty. We would have been a bit disappointed had everything been straightforward. But working with such gentlemen as the Maharaja of Sailana, with Rao Saheb Bedla of Udaipur or Maharaj-Adi-Raj Ajit Singh of

Jodhpur, was a pleasure and a privilege. There was no subterfuge; they shared openly of their recipes and of themselves as well. This book owes much to their generosity and to their memories of the Good Old Days.

What we could not learn from them, we gleaned from old cookbooks, albums, and texts—many of which we have had translated from Sanskrit or some regional language we did not know. A sampling of our findings appears on these next pages, just a survey of the wonders that were. . . .

Old Cookbooks

Until very recently, the maharaja's cooks were hired and salaried according to the amount of a certain dish they alone were able to prepare. For example, there was a two-hundred-person-pullao cook or a fifty-person-spicy-meat cook; such distinctions were both a cook's title and his pride.

In the kitchens of the grandest maharajas the most excellent and highly prized dishes were divided between two or three cooks, so that no one of them could ever master the entire recipe and abscond with a state treasure. There would be meat cooks, vegetable cooks, sweet cooks and breadmakers; feast-day cooks, fast-day cooks, and cooks for the gods in house and temple; lady cooks for the sheltered harems; cooks for the royal stables. And, of course, there were cooks for the cooks. There, it seems, the matter ended.

Under such circumstances, there was little need for a cookbook. In fact, cooking was almost entirely by instinct. It was left to the scholar or the mythological hero to record for posterity the king's culinary treasures. One of the very earliest cookbooks written in India is attributed to just such a hero. Nal, the hero, was given at the time of his wedding the gift of preparing food, not ordinary food, but such as should be fit for the gods who had granted him this gift.

It is to these gods, and particularly to Ganesh—the ele-

phant god who blesses all jovial undertakings—that Nal, the hero king, dedicates his book in the beginning; he then identifies himself and pays his respects to the king of the gods:

I am Nal by name, who have arrived here, leaving my own country. O King, there is none on the earth like me.

I should be looked upon as an expert in the knowledge of the goals of life. I also know the dressing of food, of meat also.

I know eatables, dainty dishes, articles meant for licking, sucking, and drinking, the distinction between different types of water and of the six tastes, differentiated through various pure dressings.

I know of all the seasonings accomplished with salt. And also certain striking tasty dishes which are prepared without any seasonings or water.

The sauce which I prepare is like nectar, rare as ancient sculptures of this world.

—Fifth century A.D. (?)

Nal's was one of India's earliest cookbooks.

Much later, cookbooks written by Muslim cooks left their dedications to the end and then devoted a great deal of space to lavish praise of their patrons; in this case the Maharaja of Gwalior.

A thousand thanks to God. He has given man so many things to experience, displaying them one by one. On the order of my esteemed Maharaj, I have gone to Delhi to see and record these recipes. I now humbly submit what I have seen. Thereby my name and the name of my ruler will both become famous in the whole world.

Have pity upon the poor man, full of praise, obedient and always ready to serve. The King must remain a brave man and full of wealth. Thus I pray to God and offer my salaams.

—Gwalior, nineteenth century

Cookbooks of the Muslims were largely concerned with cooking, whereas those of a Hindu master touched on every aspect of eating. Chapters in Nal's Hindu cookbook deal with varieties of rice, sauces, and clarified butter; with every kind of condiment, vegetable, and meat, with medical compounds; with beverages; and there is a special chapter each for water and milk. There is even an entire chapter devoted to tooth-brushing, a very specialized art:

For tooth-brushing a stick of the banyan tree that is juicy, pungent, and astringent, having a length of twelve fingers and a thickness of the tip of the small finger, should be used.

In the absence of the tooth-stick and on the days when the use of such sticks is prohibited, the mouth should be cleaned with twelve handfuls of water.

In this way the disorders of the sense of taste which arise from the teeth are kept away. Purity and brightness are thus promoted.

Though none of the Muslim cookbooks would have concerned themselves with the brushing of teeth, in other ways they were very similar to the old Hindu cookbooks. Both had a distinct affinity for the spectacular and for the eloquent phrase. They would never address their instructions to "you" or even to "the esteemed reader"; such books were addressed to "the expert one" or "the excellent cook" and the dishes that were to be prepared ("rarely obtainable, even to the gods") were described with reverence:

The king of soups, which shines outstandingly on the throne of cooked rice, endowed with a royal umbrella held by a number of feudatory kings, like black gram and the rows of an army of banana flowers. . . .

Even the instructions themselves were infinitely polite

Ghiyasuddin Shah supervising the preparation of sweets; an illustration from the Nimat Namah, a cookbook from Mandu, Central India, he commissioned around 1500.

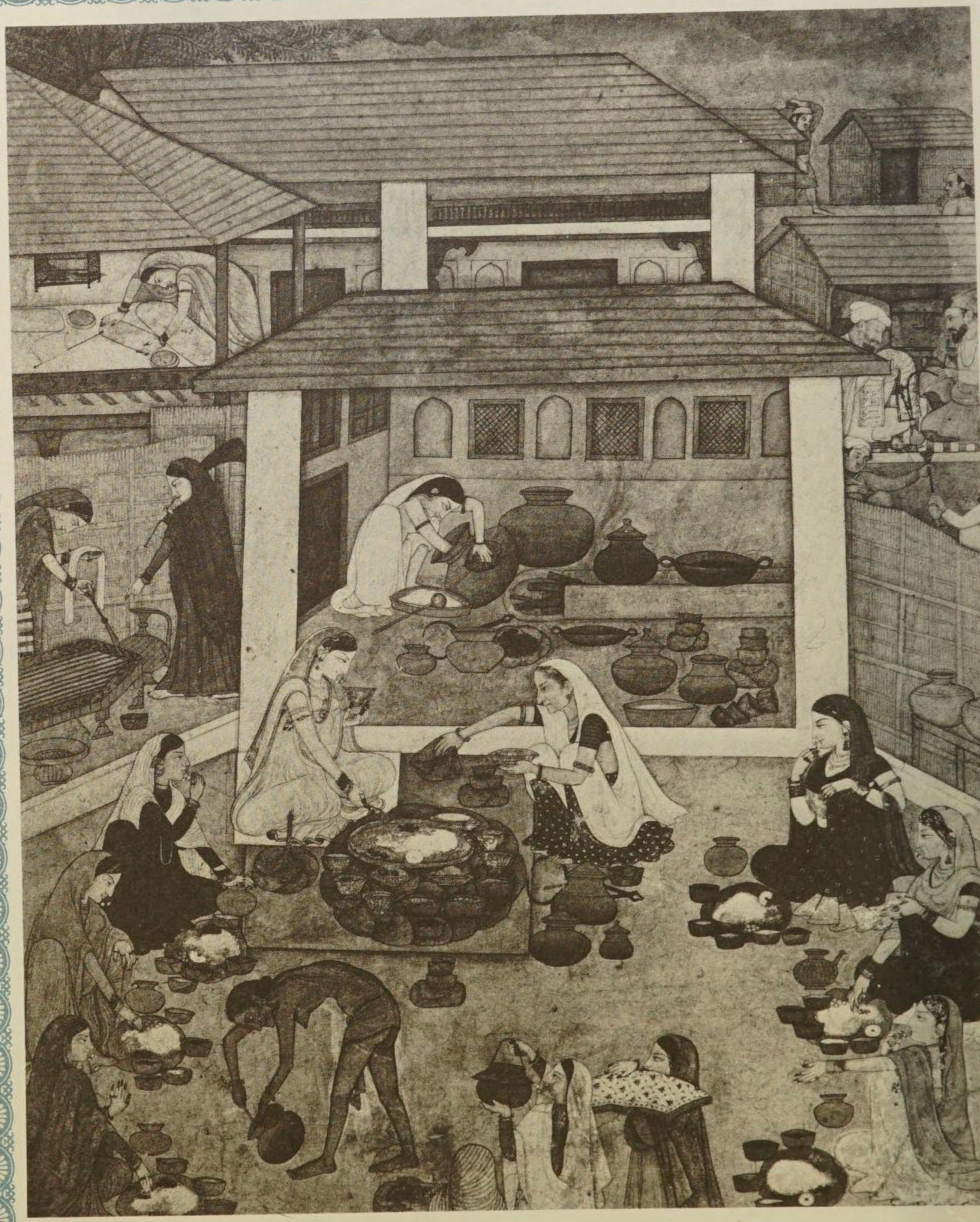
and always began at the very beginning. A certain recipe in a Muslim cookbook begins, "Take a fat chicken and sprinkle vinegar over it . . . rub in well and leave for an hour in the sun . . . then kill the chicken and carefully pluck the feathers. . . ."

Hindu cookbooks were equally thorough; the cooking instructions for rice, for example, begin with the method of winnowing the chaff off the grains.

Instructions were often poetic.

Cutting after the manner of the petals of a rose, the outer part should be cast off. Someone may chop it to the size of a broken rice grain; some other intelligent person may cut it to the size of grams. . . .

The ripe fruit of a lovely gourd should be cut with a



knife in rectangular pieces like the peak of a nearby mountain. . . .

Neither words nor expense were spared. Muslim recipes call for basting fish with such things as ten-year-old mango preserves; Hindu dishes are frequently flavoured with camphor, sandal, and essence of musk.

One of the most charming old cooking manuscripts that we translated dates from the fifteenth century. It was commissioned by an extraordinary ruler of Afghan descent, the famous Ghiyasuddin Shah. When he ascended the throne of a small Central Indian kingdom, Mandu, Ghiyasuddin announced that he had had enough of politics and warfare; he intended to devote himself to pleasure. And this is exactly what he did! He set up a city entirely staffed and administered by fifteen thousand women of varied races. Some would regard this as a dubious pleasure, but Ghiyasuddin enjoyed himself.

One of his greatest pleasures was eating. He therefore set about to immortalize the delicacies that found his royal favour. The result of his patronage, the *Nimat Namah,* contains dozens of exquisite recipes, charming in their simplicity, and some of the earliest and most enchanting miniatures to be found in Indian art. Each illustration depicts a few of his many women engaged in some culinary pursuit or other; cutting meat, cooling water, frying a sweet confection.

The *Nimat Namah* opens with an invocation of a surprisingly practical nature:

O! King of Cockroaches! Please do not eat this my offering to the culinary world, recipes of cooking food, sweetmeats, fish, and the manufacture of rose-water perfumes. . . .

Dozens of recipes follow, some unique, as they are neither Hindu nor Muslim—that is, Muslim of the type that followed the Mughal invasion and became popular

"Eat not before your husband,
but eat what he brings you."
(Proverb of Central India)

in the sixteenth century. They are quoted with great joy and naïveté, but without any measurements to speak of. The few vague indications of quantity and weight were based on the coinage of the day. Those recipes that particularly pleased the scribe (almost all of them) are crowned with a tiny compliment: "This is delicious"; "It is wonderful!"

The following recipes come from still other cookbooks we found. Try them, if you feel adventurous and can find the ingredients . . .

Method of Cooking Fish without Any Bones

Kill a heron, pull out its feathers, and let it dry, bones and all. Prepare a powder from this. Instead of adding pumpkin-gourd powder to the water for cooking the fish, add the above heron powder and prepare the dish. The fish bones will dissolve.

—Central India, nineteenth century

Method of Preparing Fragrant Clarified Butter

50 *grams rose-water* 1 *gram musk*
500 *grams butter*

Pestle the musk and rose-water and mix with the butter. When the rose-water dries away, take down the vessel from the fire and strain the clarified butter.

—Northern India, nineteenth century

Meat with Silver Syrup

500 *grams mutton*
250 *grams clarified butter*
25 *grams salt*
250 *grams cream*
250 *grams yogurt*
500 *grams onion*
2000 *grams milk*
300 *grams coriander, roasted and ground*
125 *grams onion, browned in butter and ground*
30 *grams garlic, ground*
25 *grams* garam masala
25 *grams tart fruit*
12 *grams red chili powder*

Grind all the spices together with the yogurt and rub them

into the meat, which has been pricked all over with a fork. When this paste has dried, brown the meat in clarified butter, add milk, and steam over very low heat. When half the milk has evaporated, add all the following ingredients, ground in the juice of a fragrant flower.

¾ gram saffron
1 gram musk
4 rice grains of amber
6 leaves of pure gold
6 leaves of pure silver
30 grams toasted almonds
silver-coated pistachios

—Mughal India, eighteenth century

The cook who recorded this last dish felt compelled to make the following note: "This is food for noble and kingly folk, which only they can eat. My sovereign presented me with one hundred rupees when I put this dish before him." If only this custom could be encouraged in the west, one could still actually prepare this dish. Though very expensive, both gold and silver leaf are readily available in India. Benares and Hyderabad are especially famous for these fine papers, each carefully handbeaten from one-twelfth ounce of precious metal and sold in small squares like tissue paper.

Method of Extracting Salt from an Oversalted Fish

If too much salt has been added to the pullao, tie a fine cloth over the lid of the pot and, into this cloth, grind a little pewter. Sprinkle cream over the pewter and cover the pot to simmer for a few minutes. The salt will disappear slowly.

—Central India, nineteenth century

One of the oldest medical-nutritional texts adds a note about:

How to Renew Appetite

In the case of impaired digestion due to the effects of any ungratified desire—fear, grief, et cetera, the lost longing for

A traditional meal—served on the floor, eaten with the right hand from leaf plates.

food should be restored in the patient by holding out to him the near prospect of its realization and by consoling him with the prospects of fresh joy and safety. In a case due to the loss of a splendid fortune, the bitter apathy and loathsomeness of the patient towards taking any food should be removed by infusing fresh hopes into his heart and by narrating to him the balmy stories of the *Puranas.*

—*Sushruta Samhita,* 300 B.C. (?)

Two thousand years later, this recipe for curry appeared in an introduction to Brillat Savarin's *Physiology of Taste:*

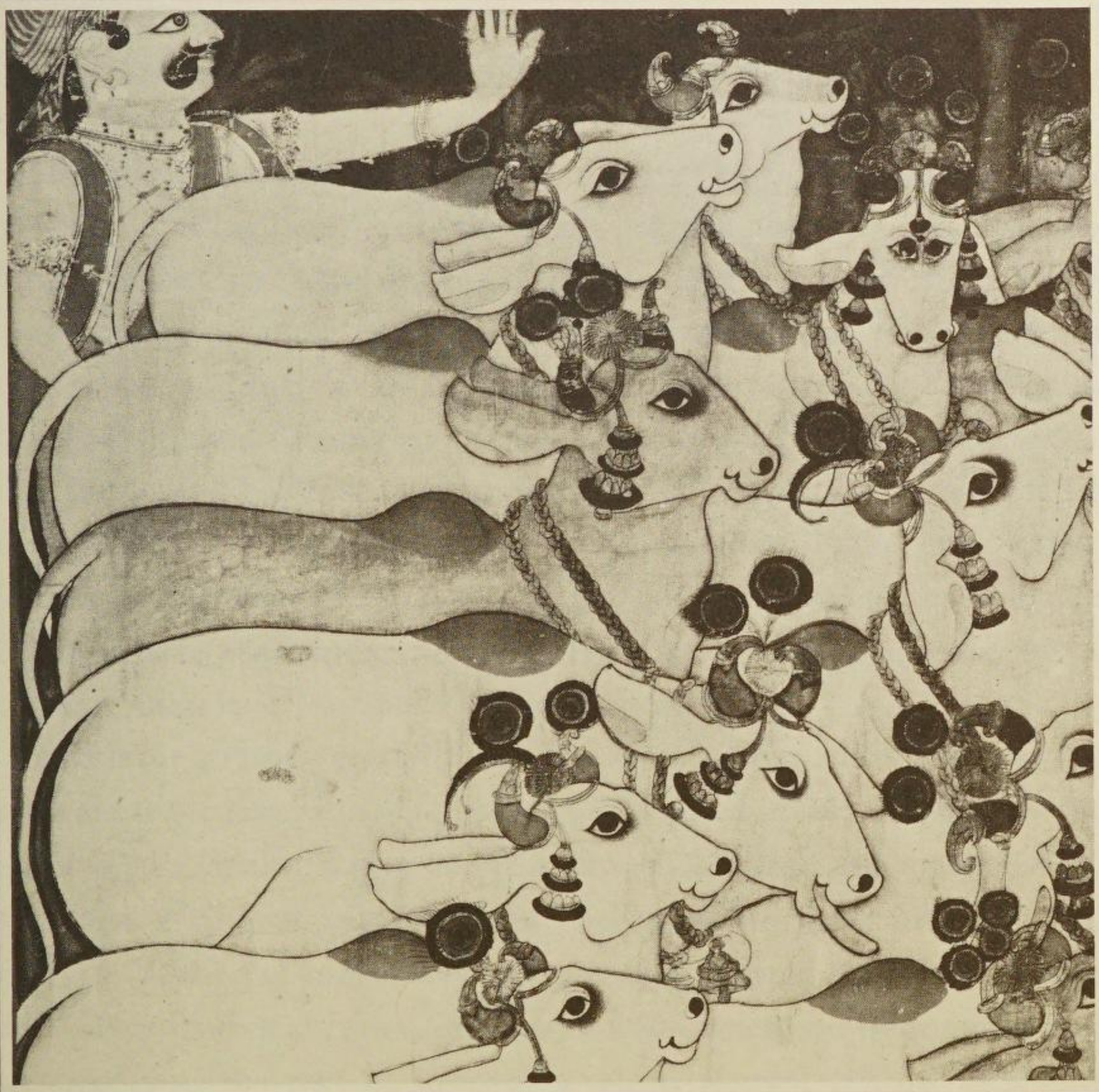
Take the remains of the leg mutton; cut it into chunks carefully including the fat, the gristle, and above all the outer skin. You cannot get the veritable and rammy rankness so admired at our honest boards unless you include the skin. And, besides, this method saves a lot of trouble

and fine work (as Mrs. Prig calls it). Put the chunks of cold mutton into a pot, and add about a pint and a half of water; also pepper and salt. Bring to the boil, and let boil pretty briskly for an hour. Then throw in a handful of curry powder, and let this merry mixture race away as it pleases, while you boil rice till it becomes a solid, sticky mass, and a very fair substitute for modelling clay. Pour out the Messpot into a shallow dish; the solids will be very hard, the liquid will be a profuse, thin, greasy, greenish-yellow matter, of an acrid, raw, burning flavour. Make a ring of the sticky rice round the dish, and serve.

The author was an Englishman. It is possible that his tongue was somewhere in his cheek, but too many would accept this as a curry. The following chapters give some alternatives.

Many of the cooks who instructed me in these recipes have already retired. I found that, in their minds, time was a pleasant jumble; and the same became true for me. Three hundred years and more of family tradition—folklore and fantasy and food—melted into a timeless and fascinating tale, with yesterday more valid than tomorrow. It did not matter if the details were misplaced; the style was undeniably there. Maharajas ruled their people, shared their crops, shared their climate, and often shared their tastes. For better or for worse, they were Annadatta, the giver of food to the people.

Part I



RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan is a region in Northwest India composed of sand and stone and several Princely States. More than any other region in India, Rajasthan embodies tradition. As a geographical entity, it was unified long before the Indian subcontinent; as a people, it has been, and still remains, diversity in unity. The diversity is a factor of constant disputes between Rajasthan's thirty-six clans. The unity is one of blood and tradition. It overrides the other divisions.

The majority of people in Rajasthan are Rajputs—literally "sons of kings." Their ruling families are the oldest in India, their traditions the most enduring. Though scholars dispute the technicalities of their origin, for the Rajputs themselves there is no question: they are descended from the sun and the moon, and their pride in this descent is deeply rooted. Royal houses such as Jodhpur and Bikaner claim their descent from the moon; other states, such as Jaipur and Udaipur, hail from the sacred sun. The hereditary ruling family of Udaipur is so closely linked with the sun that all other Hindu rulers in India acknowledge its supremacy. Subjects of His Highness the Maharana of Udaipur have been known to refuse their food if neither the sun nor its descendant, their ruler, is visible to bless their meal.

Such is the strength of tradition in the land. It gives a lilt to the life style. Designs are shaved on camels' tails; shoes are turned up at toe and heel. Turbans are tied in fanciful loops, according to one's village and vocation. Rajasthan is not a land of graceless "you" but a land of graceful "thee" and "thou"; of "Make thy august way along, friend" instead of "Move on there, mister." This kind of chivalry, in times of war—which was frequent in Rajasthan—produced the sort of history in which women burned themselves rather than please the enemy; and men, made fearless by opium, often fought that enemy to the death.

Often the foe was a brother prince, seeking to expand his state or acting as a vassal of the Mughal Empire, which ruled India for five hundred years. The Mughals, Muslims from beyond the Oxus River, threatened Rajasthan

constantly. Those rulers who sided with the Mughal Emperor gained riches beyond imagination; those who fought against him kept their pride but were defeated, and gradually the habits of the elegant and pleasure-loving Mughals crept into the local courts. Rulers who had once worn simple white began to wear embroidered cloth of gold; grilled meats that were once served on leaves gave way to elaborate stews on silver platters. One thing, however, has not changed for centuries: the Rajput passion for wild boar.

So widespread is this particular passion that it has become a Rajasthani trademark and once figured as conclusive evidence in a case against a Rajput ruler. The maharaja, a Hindu, was accused before the court of "gross misrule," directly related to his "habitual association with low and profligate Mohammedans" (whose religion forbids them to eat pig). The judge, a British agent, could not discount the charges because evidence was simply too strong: the maharaja, a Rajput of ancient blood, had refused to eat wild boar! He was convicted, for such a thing was unheard of in a land where the event of the year was the annual boar hunt.

Preparations for the hunt occupied the whole of Rajasthan for months before the actual day. Servants and vassals of the maharajas were given special dress of hunting green. Astrologers were consulted for hours on end to fix the time for the hunt, and scouts were sent to discover the boars' lairs, for the hunt must not fail. Success on this occasion meant success for the year in everything from hunting to growing crops. Every hunter did his utmost to secure a boar, with lance or with sword or by hand. And the maharaja's own kitchen was moved to the fields, ready to prepare the feast.

There is no wonder that the hunt was such a special event, given the daily fare in Rajasthan: unleavened bread made of wheat or, more often, barley, millet, or maize; a soup of legumes, flavoured with red chili peppers; and, finally, yogurt or milk. Occasionally there is a vegetable: okra or egg-plant, mustard green or fenugreek leaf; but for those in the deserts of Bikaner or Jodphur, vegetable means something less: the bark of a bush that

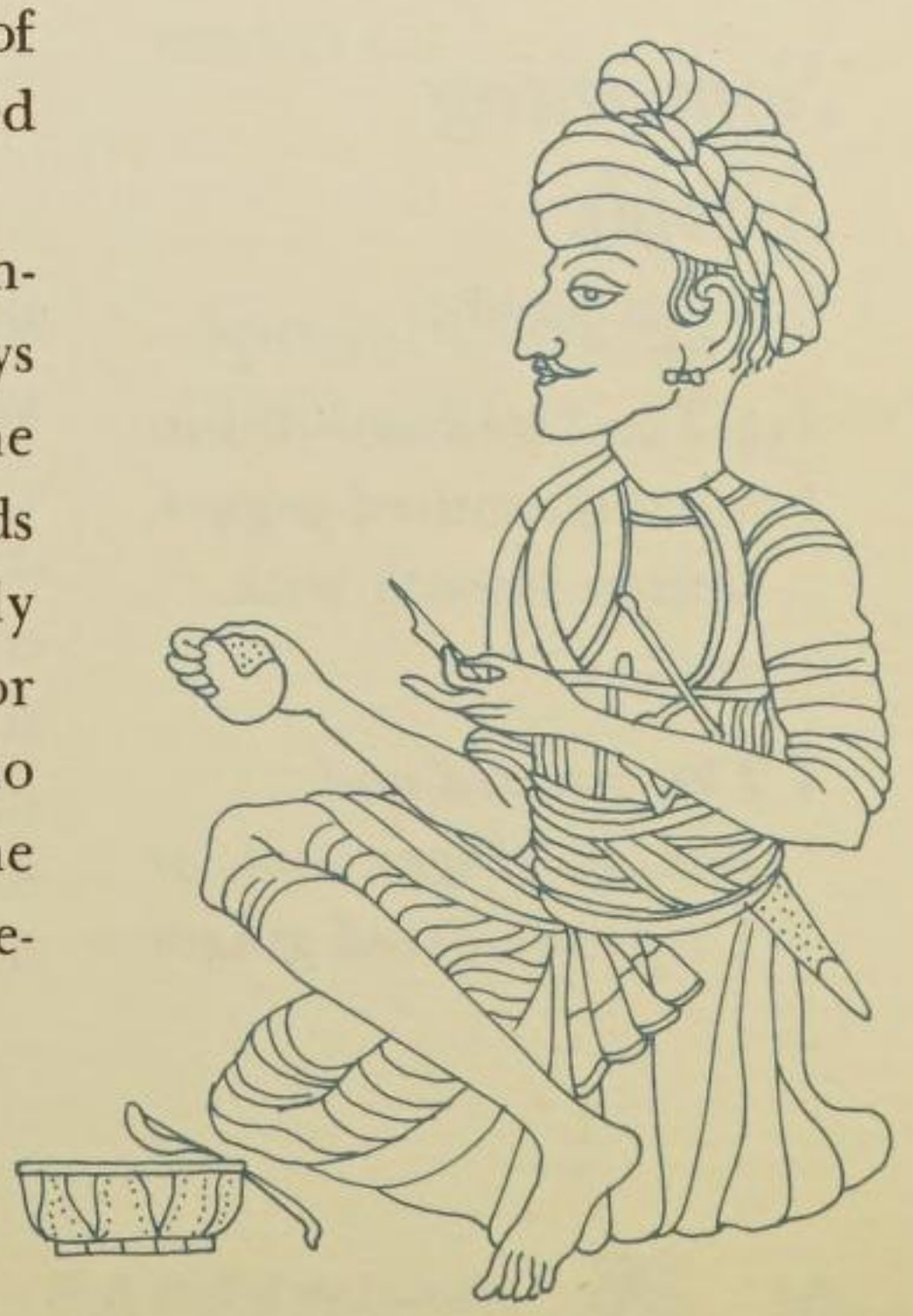
grows without water, scraggly roots, and seeds of grasses. Spices are a luxury, as is water. Opium is frequently taken. Only the wealthy, who live in towns, can afford to eat meat now and then. Many defer, for religious reasons, but the Rajputs are traditionally a meat-eating people. The picture of them squatting around a succulent boar, their silhouettes framed in sunset, is a picture that almost—but not quite—captures the essence of Rajasthan. Add a landscape that stretches all but unbroken to blunt hills on a distant horizon, a camel barely visible shuffling through the sand, a peacock perched on a parapet calmly surveying the whole, and you have a picture of Rajasthan.

One

Sailana

The Indian tradition of great cuisine has been perfected in the House of Sailana. Unbeknown to most of the country, a great deal of India has come to rest in this relatively small Rajasthani state. Because it was small and not very strategic, geographically, Sailana was free—while others were out conquering territory—to make its conquests in the kitchen. These conquests were not always easy, for recipes were often state secrets. The Maharaja of Sailana would arm himself to take a recipe with as much cunning and forethought as others armed for battle. The ingredients to be used by the cook were provided by His Highness himself—the cook not knowing that the supply of each one had been carefully weighed and measured in advance. Thus they would confront one another—royal recipe collector and cook—one determined to learn the dish, the other determined to teach it in such a way that it could not be correctly duplicated. When all the preliminaries and protocol were done, His Highness would step out of the cooking room for a hooka or a *paan* leaf. Cook would smile, and, in the absence of His Highness, would add various subtle and special ingredients, quietly lifted from the box. The dish completed, His Highness would savour it and reward the cook in proportion to his pleasure. Then he would pack up his box, quietly smiling, for the secret lay therein. He had only to measure the remains of each ingredient to know exactly what the cook had slipped in! Such was the nature of the quest.

Though the palace itself has numerous chefs, His Highness, like many of his distinguished forefathers, always prepares at least one dish himself each day. Usually in the evening, he settles in the hall (or whichever chamber finds his royal favour) ; utensils are brought in—made especially to his measure—and charcoal burners are kept burning for his pleasure. The family assembles and, if there are no guests, the ladies may forgo their veils and screens. One by one, every ingredient is laid for inspection, each re-



weighed, and some occasionally rejected: "Weigh the onions, peels on, and again when they are peeled; never bang the pot, the food won't understand; burn a bit of rice down in the fire, hungry spirits hanging about will think the meal is spoiled and leave us to eat in peace. Oh! It is a mystery! It is science! It is love! This art of cuisine. . . . To excel in it, to conquer it, you must begin with something simple. Follow the rules; work slowly and carefully; the rest will follow naturally. When you have tasted the recipe, mastered it, and made it your own—then and only then may you approach others without fear and hold your head high before the judges. When you have finished, enjoy your meal and then browse through the other dishes in this chapter. They include a discussion of rice and of the cow—without which Indian food is not Indian."

Accept the invitation
where you get nine plates of rice. . . .
—Proverb of Western India

His Highness has spoken. Please accept his invitation, and start with Something Simple. There is no better introduction to Indian food.

12/30/75

Something Simple

(Sailana Seekh)

1½ *Tbs. seedless raisins*
1 *cup unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with fork*

Place the raisins to soak in the yogurt. Set aside for later use.

1 *Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root, or*
1 *tsp. powdered ginger*

Mix together all ingredients in this section. Moisten with 2–4 Tbs. water and knead into a ball that is wet but not runny. If fresh ginger is used, grind this ball to a smooth

paste in the blender. If powdered ginger is used, the ball need not be ground. Nor, indeed, if grating fresh on Japanese ginger-grater.

2–3 *tsp. ground hot red pepper (to taste)*
¾ *tsp. powdered cardamom*
2 *Tbs. powdered coriander*
2 *tsp. salt*

In a large mixing bowl, knead this spicy paste into the meat. Set aside to marinate briefly. In a heavy, medium-sized oven-proof casserole, heat the butter and sauté onions until tender and golden. Off heat, stir in the meat and marinade.

2 *lbs. lean, boneless lamb, preferably leg or shoulder, cut into 2-inch cubes*
¼ *cup clarified butter*
½ *cup onion, cut in half from top to root across the grain into thin, even slices*

Preheat oven to 250° F.

Return pan to medium heat. Keep a pitcher of water close by. Fry the meat gently, stirring and turning occasionally with a spatula. Add 2 Tbs. water whenever necessary to prevent sticking. When the meat is half tender (15–20 minutes), substitute prepared yogurt and raisins for the water and continue adding in the same manner. When all the yogurt has been added, the meat should be completely tender and slightly saucy. Cover and bake in preheated oven for 30 minutes, allowing all the flavours to blend and mature.

Serve with plain white rice.

SERVES 4–6

Special Cooking Techniques

There are several techniques to note and remember in this simple, basic recipe. The yogurt, for example, is beaten with a fork. This is done primarily to improve its appearance. Commercial yogurt is treated in such a way that beating may be unnecessary, but homemade yogurt (there is none other in India) tends to separate a bit when it is heated. Beating prevents this, keeping the sauce smooth and attractive and allowing it to blend immediately with the spices. Yogurt is the diplomat of Indian cuisine: it is

often there, but in the background, seeing that things go smoothly; it is sweet, but—at times—slightly sharp. The sharpness cuts the richness of so many Indian dishes; the sweetness is a foil for the spice. (See page 83 for recipe.)

The ginger root is scraped and minced before measuring. This is a bit of a bore, especially as the ginger will ultimately be ground. But there is no other way to measure it accurately. To say "one inch" or "two joints" simply will not do, since the dimensions of the root are so unpredictable, and ginger in the wrong proportions can give rather unpleasant results! Despite the annoyance, fresh ginger is (almost) a must. Use it whenever available. Its flavour and fragrance are indeed agreeable and far superior to the powdered. There is an Indian proverb that simply says, "Every good quality is found in ginger." Powdered ginger, if used, should be moistened with water; it will burn and turn bitter if heated dry. This is true of almost all dry spices; especially, for some reason, if they are cooked in an iron vessel. You will note that in these recipes both the dry and wet ingredients (garlic, ginger, onion) are moistened and kneaded together into a ball to give the best possible blending before they are put in the pot.

In India ginger is stored in sand, or in a small pot of sandy soil. Buried unpeeled, it will keep several months in a dry and cool spot. If burying is impossible, wrap the root in foil and keep it in a corner of the freezer. Do not defrost before using, or you will have a sad and soggy result. Peel just the amount necessary and grate it fine while still frozen. Wrap up the rest and refreeze it. This method will do for ginger used in cooking, but not for bits of ginger used in garnish or salads, which must taste fresh and crispy as well. There you must use fresh ginger. When substituting powder, use one-fourth to one-third the amount of fresh ginger. The quantity will vary with freshness; it is never as good as the root.

Ground hot red pepper has been given throughout the book in a sliding proportion "to taste." Experiment to determine the amount you like. The smaller measurement specified should give enough "heat" for those who find prepared mustard quite hot. The larger measurement is for those who enjoy a good pepper steak. No more is necessary. Beyond this point, it is up to you. But remember that in general a dish tasting only of red pepper is a poorly made, masochistic mistake, the exception rather than the rule in the best of Indian cooking, where the test of good seasoning is a blend of spices so well balanced that no single flavour can be separately distinguished.

The ground hot red pepper used in India is not cayenne, which is made from very small, hot, unseeded chilis, nor is it chili powder. Though cayenne pepper will do in a pinch and can be substituted in the same proportion, the best ground hot red pepper will be marked exactly that, and can be found in large grocery stores and Oriental or Mexican shops. A discussion on chili peppers would make a small book since there are so many different types. The best for cooking whole are broad and at least two inches long, rather mild, and faintly sweet; but in powder there are myriad types—some ground with seeds, some without, and many (in India) mixed with red sand or bad flour.

There are two things that people unfamiliar with India have come to associate with Indian food—curry powder and some sort of chutney. You will notice that this recipe has neither. When you mixed the little ball of ginger, ground red pepper, coriander, and salt, you were preparing what might be called a curry paste or a *masala*—a blend of spices and seasonings particularly suited to the desired tastes and textures of this dish alone. Had you used instead a prepared curry powder (there are some varieties in India), the dish would have tasted of that curry powder, and so would every other dish in this book.

Chutney—the raisins, coconut, peanuts, et cetera, that are so often served with curries outside India—must have been an adaptation of the British, or perhaps the Dutch, with their multicondimented Indonesian *rijstafel.* Chutney, in that form, is rarely served with any dish in India. More often, what is thought of as chutney in the West is cooked into the dish itself, like the raisins in this dish, or the brown onions, coconut, and fruits in other meat dishes and in pullaos. Indian chutneys are incredibly varied—coconut, mint, green chili, garlic—but they are often ground and always freshly prepared to complement a particular meal. *Acchars,* or preserves, which are very common in India, also run the gamut of tastes and textures. The best ones are still prepared in the home and bear little resemblance to commercial products.

The lean, boneless lamb in this dish is a concession to Western taste. Indians love their meat dishes fatty, with bones chopped up right along with the meat. Bones enhance texture as well as the flavour, and because Indians eat with their hands, there is no inhibition about chewing on a bone and sucking away every bit of flavour. "Eat to please yourself," they say, "and dress to please the world." Try it. No need to change the proportions of meat; use the same amount with bones or without. Throughout the book, I have called for lamb or mutton and not beef, as beef is not eaten in India. It can, however, be substituted freely with very good results. As meat is generally cooked for a long time, inexpensive cuts can be used, counterbalancing the high cost of some spices and seasonings.

The spices in this dish are rubbed into the meat before cooking; there are other spicing methods for other dishes. The most common is to fry the spice paste separately and then to add it to the meat. In either case, the onions are fried first. The length of time depends on the dish. This aroma of onions frying is like a calling card, the promise

of Indian food to come. That the onions should be cut properly is an absolute must: lengthwise from top to root, then across the grain into thin, even slices. The thinner the slices, the faster they will cook, but don't be skimpy with the clarified butter. The onions must bounce in the fat, cushioned from the bottom, bubbling and browning on all sides. Too little fat and not only will the onions spoil but the meat, when fried, will stick and burn as well. Excess butter can be removed at the end and reused with fresh onions later, if you like, but for the process of frying it is crucial to have enough.

The method of making clarified butter (*ghee*) is given on page 85, along with a bit of its lore. It has a number of advantages over plain butter or oil; for Indians, the main one is taste, and you may also come to feel that way. Certainly it is pleasant to cook with clarified butter, for it is fragrant and refuses to burn. If properly prepared, it will also keep almost indefinitely—even unrefrigerated. I make up four or five pounds at a time and keep it in a tightly sealed jar. Such quantities are unnecessary if you do not use it often, but a pound or two can be very useful to have on hand for general cooking as well as Indian.

The process of frying and turning the meat is called *bhunao* in Hindi. It is an exercise in patience with an obvious reward: superior texture and flavour. Meat is fried gently in sufficient fat to cushion it from the pan. The heat is the same as for "browning" in Western cuisine, but the quantity of fat is greater, usually double. This frying continues after the meat is added, pushing and turning with a spatula until the meat just begins to stick. You must then add just enough water to arrest sticking; two tablespoons is usually sufficient. Always keep this water (or yogurt) close to the stove; for sticking can become burning very quickly.

Repeating this process of frying and adding water

achieves a unique integration of ingredients. Neither boiled nor fried, the meat absorbs flavours and liquids that make it very tender. Rather than evaporating, as they would in boiling, these flavours find their way into the meat. Meat that is tender to Indian taste can be easily broken with the fingers, quite different from the "tender" of a Western steak, which means easily cut with a knife.

So universal is this practice that Indian pots are designed for it, with rounded bottoms and sides—like a thimble. This means that less fat is required to cover the bottom and meat is easily handled, since there are no right angles to catch food or utensils. Flat-bottomed pans are a problem. They require more attention and more fat to prevent sticking, and they hold heat less evenly as well. But Indians cook on charcoal stoves or special gas burners, not the flat ones designed for the West. The solution is patience and a steady hand (you can tip the pan and fry in the collected fat or use a very small saucepan for frying). Alternatively, use a Chinese wok.

In almost all cases, a meat dish will be full-flavoured if it is allowed to sit some minutes in a warm oven. In India this trick of maturing a dish is called *dum* and is done over low coals. The pot is covered and is placed on coals so gentle that the hand can be held over them without burning. More coals are placed on top of the lid, which is concave in order to hold coals or hot water. A half-hour thus gives remarkable results. Try it in the oven and test the difference.

Finally, no figures are given at the beginning of this recipe to suggest preparation or cooking time. Almost all the meat dishes take at least one hour to prepare and cook—occasionally two or even three. So much depends upon the skill of the cook and his facility in cutting and peeling. Consequently I would recommend that a dish to be served in the evening be begun as early as possible

Maharaja of Sailana picnicking with the court.

in the day—or even the day before. Almost all meat dishes improve if they can rest and be gently reheated before they are eaten. This gives the cook a bit more composure too; Indian cooking is very demanding, especially for beginners. It also gives the kitchen a chance to clear itself of the concentration of heady aromas, which can overwhelm an appetite unfamiliar with them. Better for everyone's sake to cook well in advance and to begin with Something Simple. Serve it with plain white rice and a green salad. Work towards a full Indian meal gradually, in pleasant stages.

Fish to Ward Off Evil Spirits

(Rai ki Macchi)

3 cups unflavoured yogurt (to make one cup waterless yogurt)

2 Tbs. black mustard seed

1 Tbs. fresh, green chili pepper, seeded and minced

2 tsp. salt

¼ cup vegetable oil (preferably mustard oil)

1 lb. boneless fillets of firm, white freshwater fish, cut into strips; or 1 lb. shrimp, peeled and deveined

SERVES 2 AS ENTREE; 4 AS FIRST COURSE

The day before cooking, pour the yogurt into a large strainer, lined with a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth. Leave over a bowl to drip.

One hour before cooking, drop seeds into the blender and pulverize them. Averting the eyes, add remaining ingredients in this section and grind the whole to a fine paste. Mix this paste with the dry yogurt in the top of a double boiler. Leave for 1 hour in a warm place, longer for stronger flavour.

Fifteen minutes before serving, assemble the double boiler. Cover and bring to a gentle boil. Using the hands, carefully work the fish or shrimp into the yogurt, until they are thoroughly coated. Steam the fish until they break cleanly when bent between the fingers–and no longer (15–20 minutes).

This dish is one of the simplest in the book. It demands only strict adherence to directions: the mustard seed must be black mustard seed (yellow has a different flavour); if fish is used, it must be freshwater fish, cut in strips (most saltwater fish have too strong a flavour, and large chunks take longer to cook, thus making the sauce too liquid); the yogurt must be absolutely dry, for if the sauce is too liquid, the dish is much less appetizing.

The yogurt procedure is worth learning. Dry yogurt will be used in many recipes: as a sauce, as a marinade, and as a main dish. Commercial yogurt does not drain as well as homemade, but it does unexpectedly well. The results, after draining, should be like cream cheese. A finger poked into it should leave an impression. The draining takes at least two hours; one hour gives cottage-cheese texture—just barely pourable. This thinner consistency is required for some dishes, where the yogurt is used more as a sauce than as a marinade.

The cheesecloth must be dampened to facilitate dripping and then used to line the strainer in a double thickness. If you are draining a great deal of yogurt (more than 2 cups), drain it in two pans; the draining will go twice as fast. The drained water can be kept and used in several ways: to cook rice, or to substitute for water in the *bhunao* process of cooking meat.

The mustard seed: Since ancient times, the mustard seed has been known for its power to ward off spirits. A mother sews one of these tiny grains into her child's cap to protect him from evil spirits. Cautious old folk sleep on pillows that are stuffed with them to ward off the demons of the night. Akbar, Emperor of Mughal India, used to burn it in braziers in his stables. His precious horses were thus protected, as are you when you sample this dish. Be careful, however, of "overprotection." Add too much mustard, or substitute yellow seed, and the demons will enter, taking their vengeance in your mouth.

The technique of grinding the mustard will also be used in other recipes. It is well to remember that this black mustard seed is more pungent and flavourful but less hot than the yellow. The longer it rests in the yogurt after grinding, the stronger will be its effect. The grinding itself is an art best learned now, since there will be much of it in this book. The results of blender grinding have been tested by my cook, who approved, although the blender

spat at him once. "That," he said, "my grinding stone would never do. Otherwise blender grinding is fine." While testing these recipes, we learned several tricks that result in a better grind:

When there is a small amount of ingredients to pulverize, use an artificial lid, made of foil or foil-covered cardboard. Fit it down inside the blender jar, about three inches from the blade. This prevents the contents from scattering and gives a much finer grind.

When grinding larger quantities, always stop to scrape down the sides. The grind will be uneven—and cook unevenly—if you neglect this sometimes tedious precaution.

Always drop in the things to be ground one by one, in the order in which they are listed in the recipe. I have tried to list them always with the hard-to-grind ingredients first. These must be thoroughly pulverized before the remaining ingredients are added. If your reflexes are very good, the best way to get a fine grind is to turn on the machine to medium (with water in it, if necessary) and slip the ingredients in as it rotates, quickly replacing the lid. Dry spices will not powder if you add water. A coffee grinder set to extra fine is excellent for pulverizing dry spices, if you are willing to dedicate it to the cause.

In general, wet spices—garlic, ginger, onions, et cetera—need a bit of water or yogurt to grind properly. The amounts I have suggested are approximate. Never use more than is necessary to allow the blades to turn with ease.

Some recipes call for rather heavy grinding—including the puréeing of cooked, ground meat. Do this in several stages and spare the life of the blender.

The flavour is in the clarified butter,
but the eldest daughter-in-law gets the credit.
—Proverb of Rajasthan

Eldest Daughter-in-Law's Dinner
(Pasandes)

The meaning of the proverb is obvious: the dish itself does the work. You get the praise. Everyone gets the pleasure. Simply mix meat and spices and bake.

Preheat oven to 350° F.

In a large, oven-proof casserole that can be lidded, heat the butter and fry all the ingredients in this section until the onions are golden brown and just crisping. Remove from heat to cool in the casserole. Remember that onions will continue cooking in the hot oil, so beware of burning them.

1 cup clarified butter
¾ cup onion, cut in half from top to root and across the grain into thin, even slices
3 bay leaves
seeds of 8 cardamom pods, or ¼ tsp. powdered cardamom
3-inch cinnamon stick

Drop the yogurt into the blender jar and turn the blender on low. Mix together all the remaining ingredients in this section and drop them into the moving blender. Grind until the mixture is reduced to a fine, thin paste. Stir this paste into the onions and spices in the casserole. Set aside. Do not rinse out the blender jar—yet.

½ cup unflavoured yogurt
2 Tbs. peeled, whole garlic
½ cup minced onion
4 Tbs. scraped and chopped ginger root, or 1 Tbs. powdered ginger
2–4 tsp. ground hot red pepper (to taste)
3½ Tbs. powdered coriander
2 tsp. salt
1 Tbs. powdered cumin
1 tsp. turmeric
3 Tbs. dried fenugreek leaves (methi), or 1

cup fresh leaves, or substitute 1 *cup stemmed and coarsely chopped parsley*

2 *lbs. lean loin or shoulder of lamb or* 2 *lbs. lean beef fillets, cut* ¼*-inch thin*

If using lamb, slice the meat off the bone in ½-inch thicknesses and pound these slices carefully with a rolling pin or meat hammer until they are as thin as possible without tearing. Cut them into strips 3 inches wide. Swab one strip into the blender jar to dislodge remaining paste. Stir all meat into the casserole, coating it thoroughly with the paste. Cover the casserole with foil, crimping the edges to seal. Press lid on firmly. Place in middle of preheated oven for 30 minutes. Every 15 minutes, shake the casserole back and forth gently, without uncovering. This causes the meat to cook in its own flavourful steam.

SERVES 4–6

Serve with plain rice and a vegetable.

Rice

Because rice is such an important staple in Indian cooking, an accompaniment to nearly every main-course dish, it deserves a separate section devoted to its history and its preparation. First, a story from India's book of fables, the *Panchatantra,* to demonstrate its versatility:

In Tamil land in a city called Kanci lived the millionaire son of a merchant prince. His name was Saktikumara, and when he was about eighteen years old, he began to worry.

"There is no happiness without a wife," he reflected "nor with a wife if she is disagreeable. But how to find a wife who has all the wifely virtues?"

Tucking two pounds of unthreshed rice in the hem of his garment, he wandered through the land. Everyone who had daughters displayed them before him, but however well marked and suitable the girl was, Saktikumara would ask, "Are you able, my dear, to prepare a complete meal

for us with these two pounds of rice?" Thus he roamed from house to house, entering only to be laughed at and thrown out.

At last one day he came upon a girl who was perfectly proportioned and who, though she was poor, had all the auspicious marks. So he asked with a kindly look, "Would you be able, my dear, to make a complete meal with this rice?"

The girl gave her old servant a meaningful glance; whereupon the woman took the two pounds of rice from him and placed it on the terrace before the door, after sprinkling and scrubbing it thoroughly. Then she washed the girl's feet. The girl then dried the sweet-smelling rice measure by measure, repeatedly turning it over in the sun, and when it was thoroughly dry, she spread it on a hard, smooth part of the floor, threshed it very, very gently with the edge of a reed stalk, and finally took all the rice grains out of the husks without breaking them.

Then she said to her servant, "Mother, jewelers want these husks; they use them to polish jewelry. Sell it to them and, with the pennies they give you, you must buy good hard firewood sticks, neither too dry nor too damp, a small pan, and two shallow bowls."

When the servant had done that, the girl placed the rice grains in a shallow mortar of *kakubha* wood with a flat, wide bottom and began pounding them with a long, heavy, iron-tipped, smooth-bodied pestle of *khadira* wood that was slightly recessed in the middle to form a grip. She tired her arms in a charming play of raising and dropping, picking up and picking out single grains, which she then cleaned of chaff and awn in a winnowing basket, washed repeatedly in water, and, after a small offering to the fireplace, dropped in boiling water, five parts water to one part rice.

As the grains softened and started to jump and swelled to the size of a bud, she lowered the fire and, holding the lid on the pot, poured out the scum. Then she plunged

her spoon in the rice, turned the grains with the spoon, and, having satisfied herself that they were evenly boiled, turned the pot upside down on its lid to let the rice steam. She poured water over those firesticks that had not burned up entirely, and, when the fire had died and the heat was gone, she sent this charcoal to the dealers: "Buy with the coin you receive as much of vegetables, clarified butter, curds, oil, *myrobalan,* and tamarinds as you can get."

When this had been done, she added two or three kinds of spices, and once the rice broth was transferred to a new bowl placed on wet sand, she cooled it with gentle strokes of a palm-leaf fan, added salt, and scented it with fragrant powder, and finally relayed through her servant the invitation to a bath. The old nurse, clean from a bath herself, gave Saktikumara *myrobalan* and oil, whereupon he bathed. After his bath he sat down on a plank placed on sprinkled and swept stones. He tasted the two bowls that were placed on a light green banana-tree leaf from her own garden—a quarter of one leaf was used—and she set the rice broth before him.

A farfetched story? On the contrary. It covers but a few of the many, many uses of rice. The husks left after polishing can also be used in painting miniatures and frescoes, ground to make a primary coat of paint. Water poured off the cooked rice that has been rinsed of starch can be carefully saved for starching saris. Powdered rice can be sprinkled in designs to bless the hearth and decorate doorways. Whole rice grains are offered to the gods and scattered at auspicious occasions.

A grain of rice was traditionally given a standard weight value and was the basis for all weights and measures. The old word for rice in North India was *anna,* which eventually became a weight and a coin as well. One anna was—long, long ago—the price of a decent meal. So "anna" meant many things at the same time: rice, a weight, and above all, food. Annapurna is the goddess of food. *Anna-*

datta means giver of food. Maharajas were known to their people as *Annadatta.*

If meanings of the word for rice were many and confusing, rules for the use of rice were more numerous still. According to the ancients, it must always be washed: thrice for the gods, twice for a guest, and once for ancestors. Every little grain must be perfect and unbroken. Traditionally there were thirty-nine varieties. Red was held to be the best, but the simple people loved all thirty-nine. They used to say while sorting out the grains:

There are many different kinds of rice,
but not so many as human beings . . .
and that is why human beings are greater. . . .

Perhaps it was this knowledge that gave them confidence to cook rice. Never, never, never did it fail. The method is simple. All you need is one knuckle and the firm belief that human beings are greater. Wash the rice until the water runs clear; it will be lighter without the starchy coating and it will cook better. Then leave it to soak in water to cover. "To cover" is the trick, because the rice cooks in this water and involves a certain standard proportion. One and a half knuckles—from the top of the rice to the level of the water—is a centuries-old and foolproof measuring stick. Whenever you are ready, bring this water and the rice to a boil that keeps the grains in constant motion. Add some salt (about 1½ teaspoons per cup of rice) and keep it boiling until the water cooks down to the level of the rice. Then cover tightly, turn off heat and let it steam.

Cooked rice can be tested by one grain.
—Ancient proverb

Each grain should be separate, soft but not mushy. It will be so if you followed the rules. Do not stir too much, and when you do, stir with a fork. Above all have faith. (If all fails you can blame your knuckle.)

Contentment, a Lentil Soup
(Sada Dal)

The very same ancient Indian sages who listed, under the beneficent auspices of royal patronage, thirty-nine varieties of rice, one hundred seventy-two positions for love-making, and eighteen different words for cow (according to her stage of life) have recognized nine classic and unalterable sentiments: love, mirth, tenderness, anger, heroism, terror, disgust and surprise, tranquillity, and contentment. Any one of these sentiments, according to the sages, can be embodied in a flavour sensation. This soup, for example, is pure contentment. With hot, steaming rice, it is a meal in itself—so simple a child can prepare it.

½ *cup clarified butter*
1 *Tbs. minced garlic*

In a heavy, medium-sized saucepan, mix the butter and garlic and sauté over medium heat while preparing the next step.

½–1 *tsp. ground hot red pepper (to taste)*
½ *tsp. turmeric*
1½ *tsp. powdered cumin*
2 *tsp. salt*

In a small saucer, quickly mix all the ingredients in this section with 2 Tbs. water to make a thick paste. When the garlic is just beginning to brown, add this paste into the butter and stir with a fork for 2 minutes (not less).

1 *cup dried pigeon peas, carefully picked and washed until the water runs clear (tuar dal)*
2–4 *fresh, green chili peppers, seeded and minced*

Add pigeon peas and chilis and stir for another two minutes. Pour 2½ cups water into the pan and simmer covered over very low heat for 1 hour or until peas have completely disintegrated.

SERVES 2 AS ENTREE;
4 AS SIDE DISH

Pour, steaming hot, over individual bowls of hot rice.

Unorthodox Soup
(Haleem)

Almonds, mint, richness, and elegance—everything about this soup speaks of its Mughal pedigree; everything, that is, but the pigs' feet. The pig was an animal strictly forbidden to the Mughals, who were orthodox Muslims. An explanation of the pig's presence here lies perhaps in the pages of history, in the eventful reign of Jehangir, Mughal

Emperor of India. Something of a heretic all his life, Jehangir battled constantly with his priests. At last, quite fed up with their criticism, he summoned them all to his court. "You have criticized, Your Excellencies, my supposed heretical activities—Hindu dress, foreign paintings, and now my eating of the pig. So I ask you to tell me, which is the religion which will allow me to enjoy all these pleasures? I shall consecrate myself to it immediately." The horrified priests, who could not but answer "Christianity," hastily condoned all the king's actions. And thus we enjoy these pigs' feet in an unorthodox Muslim dish.

Three hours before serving, tie the pigs' feet in cheesecloth and place in a large pot. Cover with water and bring to a boil. Skim the fat. Simmer uncovered for 3–4 hours, or until the meat has fallen away from the bones. Remove the bag to a large bowl to cool. Reserve the broth in the pot. When the bag has cooled, open it and discard bones and cartilage. Return meat to the broth in the pot.

- 8 *large, unsalted pigs' feet, washed and broken in large pieces.*

Reduce almonds, flour, and 1 Tbs. water to a fine paste in the blender, adding more water if necessary.

- 2 *Tbs. blanched, unsalted almonds*
- 4½ *tsp. white flour*

Mix the milk into the paste in the blender and blend briefly. In a deep, heavy-bottomed pot, heat the butter and sauté all spices in this section until they crackle and emit their fragrance. Off heat, add in the blender mixture and 1 cup reserved broth. Cook uncovered, bubbling gently, for 15 minutes. Taste for salt.

- 4 *cups whole milk*
- 1 *Tbs. clarified butter or enough to cover bottom of pot*
- 4 *cloves*
- 3 *inches of cinnamon stick*
- 1½ *tsp. cumin seed*
- 3 *cardamom pods*

If the soup is too salty, add 1 cup milk. If not, add 1 cup additional reserved broth. Stir. Add all the reserved shredded meat and half the quantity of mint. Simmer covered for 20 minutes. After this the soup will hold up to two days refrigerated. Reheat it without bringing to a boil.

- 1 *cup whole milk or* 1 *cup reserved broth*
- ½ *cup fresh mint, minced*

fresh lime or lemon juice (about 1 tsp.)

SERVES 8–10 AS APPETIZER.

Just before serving, add the remaining mint and fresh lemon or lime juice to taste. If this soup is served too cool or in too great a quantity it will be less pleasing than a small cup, served piping hot.

Meat to Separate the Boys from the Mince

(Hari Mirchi Wala Kima)

India's passion for classification is seemingly unbounded. Consider the following, which is taken from a medical text, written two thousand years B.C. (Before Chilis).

The length of the air column of exhaled breath, given in fingerbreadths:
normal, 12
walking, 24
sleeping, 16
sleeping deeply, 30
eating, 20

If the eating figure shows a marked increase while you partake of this dish, refer the matter to the Portuguese. It was they who imported the chili pepper to India. Not until the early eighteenth century were its pleasures known to Indian cuisine.

He who is adventurous, of stout heart and strong constitution, is advised to sample of this dish. By doing so he will pave the way for his friends, who have nothing to fear from the chili peppers. Because of the length of time they are cooked and the precaution of removing their seeds, these peppers have flavour but only modest fire—twenty-four on the exhaled-air scale. . . .

½ cup clarified butter
2½ cups onion, cut in half from top to root and across the grain into thin, even slices
2 lbs. lean ground lamb (or beef)

Two hours before serving heat the butter in a heavy, medium-sized casserole, and sauté the onions until they are just clear and tender (about 5 minutes). Mix together the remaining ingredients in this section and add to the onion butter. Fry gently, stirring constantly, until the meat is browned and all the liquid absorbed. Add 2 cups of water. Cover and cook over medium-low heat until

liquid is reduced to the level of the meat (approximately one-half hour) .

4 tsp. cumin seed
4½ tsp. salt
2 cups unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with a fork

Preheat oven to 300° F.

Add all remaining ingredients to the pan. Stir over high heat to boil off all liquid. After 5 minutes, cover tightly and place in the middle of preheated oven for 1–1½ hours (flavours should be thoroughly blended.)

1 lb. green chili peppers at least 3 inches long, seeded and cut lengthwise in thin strips
2 cups coarsely chopped onion
½ cup peeled garlic cloves
3 Tbs. lime juice
1 cup minced fresh coriander leaf (cilantro), or 1 cup minced parsley

Serve with a side dish of yogurt and rice.

SERVES 4

Note: Be wary in handling the chilis; the seeds leave strong oils on the hands that can be very irritating to your eyes.

Full Moon Kababs

(Sikampuri Kabab)

It is recorded that these tiny nuggets of meat, in which the moon is so cunningly concealed, never once failed to enchant the Maharaja of Sailana. He and his guests would wait patiently as they were made, each one fresh and crisply fried, garnished with a fable which made the time fly by.

Three hours before serving, choose a sweet or tart filling. For sweet, pour the cream into an ice cube tray, cover with foil and put into the freezer. If tart, pour the yogurt

For a sweet kabab: 1 cup heavy whipping cream
or

For a tart kabab: 3 cups unflavoured yogurt

into a large strainer, lined with a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth and set over a bowl to drain (about 1 cup dry yogurt required) . Either process will take about 2 hours.

2½ Tbs. unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with a fork
1 lb. lean ground lamb or beef
¼ tsp. broken red chili flakes or ¼ tsp. powder
1½ inches of cinnamon stick
2 bay leaves
1 tsp. salt

In a heavy, medium-sized saucepan, mix the 2½ Tbs. of yogurt and meat together. Tie the remaining spices in this section into a piece of cheesecloth and drop in the pan. Pour in 2 cups water and bring to a boil uncovered. Skim. Cover and simmer until all liquid is absorbed and the meat is completely tender.

2 tsp. chick-peas, or 1 Tbs. chick-pea flour (or 1 Tbs. all-purpose flour)

Meanwhile dry-roast the chick-peas or flour in an ungreased skillet, turning constantly until they are fragrant and khaki colour. If using whole chick-peas, pulverize them in the blender after roasting. Sift and set aside.

1 Tbs. seeded and minced fresh, green chili pepper
2 Tbs. minced, fresh mint, or 1½ tsp. dried mint
1 Tbs. fresh lime juice
1 egg, beaten

When the meat is ready, uncover the pot and boil off excess liquid. Quickly stir in chick-pea flour and all ingredients in this section. Mix thoroughly. Purée half this mixture in the blender, adding 1 Tbs. water if necessary. Remove to a bowl and purée the second half. Recombine all meat in the bowl and leave to sit for at least 30 minutes. (At this stage it will keep covered in the refrigerator for 2 days; up to 3 months in freezer, but fresh mint and lime juice should be added just before using.)

Twenty minutes before serving, preheat oven to warm (250°) and line a pie dish with paper toweling. Divide the meat into 12 equal balls. Place the yogurt or frozen cream next to meat on the counter.

In a very small saucepan, heat the oil to medium. Working fast, press one meat ball into the palm of the right hand, indenting it in the center. Spoon ½ tsp. yogurt or cream into this indentation and quickly wrap the meat around it, pressing it to form a smooth ball. As they are formed, drop the balls gently into the hot oil and turn until they are golden brown. Continue to form new balls as these are cooking. Remove with slotted spoon and keep warm in pie pan. Cream-filled kababs must be served as soon as possible; yogurt-filled ones may be held in warm oven.

oil for deep frying: to cover saucepan to depth of 3 inches

MAKES 12 KABABS

Serve these kababs hot as a first course or hors d'oeuvres, with the following full-moon fable:

How the Sun, the Moon, and the Wind Went Out to Dinner

One day, the sun, the moon, and the wind went out to dine with their uncle and aunt, thunder and lightning. Their mother (one of the most distant stars you see far up in the sky) waited alone for the children's return.

Now both the sun and the wind were greedy and selfish. They enjoyed the great feast that had been prepared for them, without a thought of saving any of it to take home to their mother—but the gentle moon did not forget her. Of every dainty that was brought around, she placed a small portion under one of her beautiful long fingernails, that the star might also have a share in the treat.

On their return, their mother, who had kept watch for them all night along with her little bright eye, said, "Well, children, what have you brought home for me?" Then the sun (who was eldest) said, "I have brought home nothing for you. I went to enjoy myself with my friends—not to fetch a dinner for my mother." And the wind said, "Neither have I brought anything home for you, Mother. You could hardly expect me to bring a collection of good things for you, when I merely went out for my own pleasure." But the moon said, "Mother, fetch a plate, see what I

have brought for you." And shaking her hands, she showered down such a choice dinner as never was seen before.

Then the star turned to the sun and spoke thus. "Because you went out to amuse yourself with your friends and feasted and enjoyed yourself, without any thought of your mother at home, you shall be cursed. Henceforth your rays shall ever be hot and scorching, and shall burn all that they touch. And men shall hate you and cover their heads when you appear." (And that is why the sun is so hot to this day.)

Then she turned to the wind and said, "You also, who forgot your mother in the midst of your selfish pleasures—hear your doom. You shall always blow in the hot, dry weather and shall parch and shrivel all living things and men shall detest and avoid you from this very time." (And that is why the wind in the hot weather is still so disagreeable.)

But to the moon, she said, "Daughter, because you remembered your mother, and kept for her a share in your own enjoyment, henceforth you shall be ever cool and calm and bright. No noxious glare shall accompany your pure rays, and men shall call you blessed." (And that is why the moon's light is so soft, and cool and beautiful even to this day.)

Meat to Make with a Friend

(Shamshabadi Kaliya)

Leave the cooking rice,
but do not leave your guests.
—Proverb of Central India

If the proverb is to be heeded, this meal must be prepared well in advance or else the guest must be prepared for a pleasant conversation around the kitchen hearth. For the dish demands attention and patient lubrication, and these rules apply to man as well as meat!

Arrange spirits and souls around a bright fire. Install the cook comfortably and commence cooking.

In a heavy, medium-sized pot, heat the butter and sauté all the ingredients in this section until the onions are golden and just crisping. Set aside off heat. If you do not like whole spices in the finished dish, tie them in a cheesecloth bag for easy removal when the meat is ready.

⅔ cup clarified butter
2 tsp. black peppercorns
6 inches of cinnamon stick
2 tsp. cloves
seeds of 12 cardamom pods
1 cup onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices

Purée ginger and garlic in blender with ¼ cup water. Pour into a bowl with meat and salt and mix well. Stir this meat into the sautéed onions and return to medium heat. Cook, stirring constantly, until all the liquid is evaporated.

2 tsp. ginger root, scraped and minced
2 tsp. garlic, minced
1 Tbs. salt
2 lbs. lean, boneless lamb, cut into 2-inch cubes

Then begin adding the yogurt, 2 Tbs. at a time. Keep the fire very low and let each addition of yogurt be fully absorbed before adding the next. When all the yogurt is absorbed, continue the same process with the cream, and finally the milk (a 20- to 45-minute process, depending on the quality of the meat). When the meat is ready, it will be rich and creamy and the excess liquids will have formed a smooth sauce.

2 cups unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with a fork
2 cups whipping cream
2 cups whole milk

If desired, remove the whole spices before serving.

Serve with rice and a spicy vegetable.

SERVES 4

The Cow

They, the learned people, say that on the earth
there is the cow in the form of cooked food,
whose figure assumes many varieties.
To her supplicants, she respectfully yields milk
in a vessel like the tip of her tongue.

—*Nal,* Pak Shastra, *fifth century* A.D. (*?*)

Meat, beef as well as lamb, has played an important role in the preceding recipes and so have the products of the cow, India's most respected animal after the honoured guest. Hence, a section dedicated solely to the significance and preparation of these items.

In ancient India, an honoured guest was called a *goguna* —one for whom a cow is killed. The killing of the cow was actually at the discretion of the guest. When it was brought before him, he might choose to release it, with the words, "Do not kill the guiltless cow. Let it drink water. Let it eat grass." Or, he might choose to have it killed in recognition of the honour bestowed upon him by his hospitable hosts, uttering the words, "Destroy my sin and the sin of my host." Whichever the case, etiquette required that an honoured guest must be offered meat of some sort to commemorate his visit—almost the antithesis of present-day hospitality among orthodox Hindus. Today's cow, in fact, may never even be killed, much less eaten!

Yet even at the time that cows were killed as sacrificial animals, they were recognized and revered as beings of almost perfect purity. Those who were to arbitrate a dispute, for example, donned a cow skin as a symbol of all wisdom and justice while sitting in judgement. The fertility of certain bulls was carefully watched in ancient India; for their fertility was believed to be an omen of well-being for the entire community.

Veneration for the cow in a society whose entire economy depended upon the beast—its products and its labour —was natural. Even before Hindu society rejected the killing of cattle, the cow represented wealth and was con-

sidered more valuable alive than dead.

Still, it has been only in the last fifteen hundred years that the practice of killing cows has waned. Bernier, a traveller in India in the seventeenth century, speculated with good common sense about the reasons for this: "This superior regard for the cow may . . . be owing to her extraordinary usefulness as being the animal which supplies them [the Hindus] with milk and butter—a considerable part of their aliment—and which may be considered the source of husbandry, consequently the preserver of life itself. It ought likewise to be observed that owing to the great deficiency of pasture land in the Indies, it is impossible to maintain large numbers of cattle; their whole therefore would soon disappear if animal food were eaten in anything like the proportion which is consumed in France and England, and the country would thus remain uncultivated."

More complicated fellows than Bernier, however, trace this change in attitude towards the cow to the rising power of the priestly Brahmin caste in India, as the entire caste system became more entrenched. Half animal and half divine, the cow came to be associated symbolically with the Brahmin. Both of them were supposed to represent purity; and the purity of others was measured against theirs. It was an arrangement satisfactory to both the Brahmins and the cows; gradually, offering food to a cow became a substitute for the sacrificial killing of one. The object was still the same: to appease the gods and appeal to them to protect both man and cow.

More and more the cow or the bull became associated with deities. In mythology the bull Nandi is Shiva's steed, whose statue is found in most Shiva temples. As a youth, Lord Krishna was a cowherd, and is so immortalized in Indian art. The cow's fortune rose and fell with the popularity of these various deities. But the strictures against cow killing became ever stronger: "Beef eating is an offense

against the ancestors." "The gods will take away the children of one who eats a cow." "Those who eat beef flesh rot in hell for as many years as hair on the body of a cow."

The animal and its products also began to take on more and more significance as a symbol of nonviolence and purification. If a child's horoscope forecast evil, he was made to be born again by symbolically passing him under the belly of a cow. The dust stirred up by a herd of cows was carefully gathered and sprinkled over the body as a spiritually beneficial bath. And only by holding the tail of a cow could a dying man hope to cross over the horrible river of blood and filth which separates him from that peaceful pool in which all departed spirits await the next life. And—in the same spirit—any Hindu who had crossed the "black waters" surrounding the Indian subcontinent could not be purified of this contamination without a ritual bath in the five products of the cow.

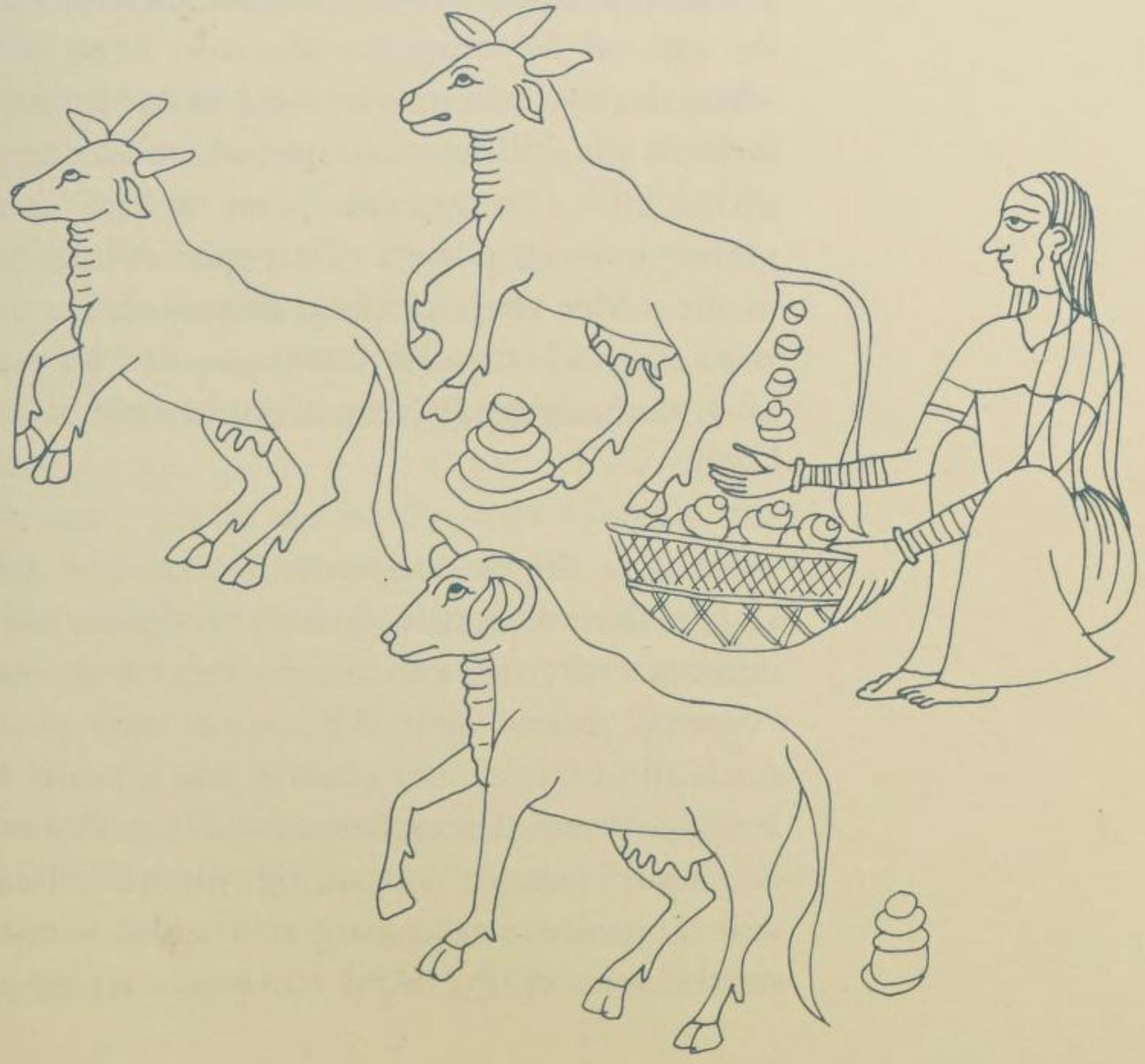
These five "immortal nectars"—honey, sugar, milk, yogurt, and clarified butter—are called, in Hindi, the *Panch Amrit*. It was from this term that the British, when their Empire encompassed India, derived the word "punch." (A sixth immortal nectar?)

The concept of *Panch Amrit*—and its importance in Hindu life, religion, and diet—is ancient. But two of the five—honey and sugar—have been added only in the last few hundred years. They are substitutions for the urine and dung of the sacred cow, once the fourth and fifth immortal nectars. So great was the importance of these original five products of the cow that their presence was essential at any occasion or undertaking. Births, marriages, blessings or deaths—*Panch Amrit* was the pure and purifying offering at each of these and many other occasions.

Separately, each of the five immortal nectars has its own special significance—both symbolic and practical. Urine of the cow is still drunk today, though much less widely. It is believed to bring all the blessings of the divine cow

upon the consumer and to endow him with all manner of strength-giving properties. This practice does not seem extreme when compared with a reverence for the cow so fervent that the very dust of its footprints is gathered and treasured as a medicinal additive.

Dung of the cow is also sacred, though extremely practical as well. As an early English traveller noted, " 'tis no wonder that the Genties use it often and perhaps every day, in places where they eat, which above all the rest are to be very neat." Dung plastered in the courtyard—and especially in the cooking courtyard of the house—sanctifies those all-important areas and at the same time gives a neat, pleasant appearance. Even the cooking stoves are made with cow dung, mixed with mud and straw.



May four oceans, full of milk,
constantly abide in both your breasts, you blessed one,
for the increase of the strength of the child.
Drinking of the milk whose sap is the sap of immortal life divine,
may your boy gain long life,
as do the gods by feeding on the beverages of immortality.

In this prayer, chanted to the Hindu mother at the first feeding of her child, is all man's reverence for life-giving milk—another of the "immortal nectars." This reverence amounts to worship when that milk springs from the sacred cow. Milk may well be the most important of the five immortal nectars. If it is considered divine because it comes from the cow, surely the reverse is also true: the importance of milk in everyday life explains a great deal of the general reverence for the cow. Even in ancient times when the cow was not yet held to be divine, specific rules forbade the killing of a cow in calf or a cow who was giving milk. To this day, poets and physicians alike sing praises unto its powers. That special milk which remains in the udder after suckling, mixed with a bit of the froth from the suckled milk itself, is called an essence fit for a king, embodying all that is tender and sacred in motherhood.

Another "immortal nectar," yogurt, is omnipresent in Indian life. Hair is washed in it, deities are bathed in it, demons exorcised, ceremonies sanctified, and—above all—"curries" sauced in it. The word "curry," poor maligned catch-all of Occidental cuisine, was actually born in South India, a direct descendant of the Tamil word *keri,* which originally meant "containing yogurt." Today there are still those who would insist that a dish without yogurt can never be a "curry." Add curry powder as you may, they

will not be dissuaded; and perhaps rightly so.

Along with milk and clarified butter, yogurt is one of the oldest of Indian foods. In ancient India, there were at least four different names for it, depending upon the quantity of water that the yogurt contained. It has infinite uses. Butter was made of it; it was drunk as a beverage, eaten as a meal in itself, and mixed with such flavorings as cloves, pomegranate seeds, and camphor to make confections. Even its sourness could be an asset. Some recipes call for a yogurt to be left for some time to sour before use in a certain dish. The making of yogurt is a simple and soothing affair. It needs no special gadgets or equipment.

How to Make Yogurt

In a medium saucepan, heat one pint of whole fresh unhomogenized milk until it is warm but not very hot. Mix in one tablespoon of unflavoured yogurt. Pour this mixture 3 to 4 times between two saucepans to insure an even setting.

Set the bowl in a warm place (between 90° and 110°) for 3 to 4 hours. In cold climates, wrap the bowl in a blanket or towel and set in a warm place for 12 to 15 hours. Do not place in refrigerator until it has completely set. The yogurt will not spoil unrefrigerated.

Pouring the milk and yogurt starter into a wide mouth thermos to set after heating will speed the process. Do not remove until set.

Should the water separate out of the yogurt, either the milk was too hot at the time the yogurt starter was added or temperatures during the setting process were too high. Reserve a bit of yogurt each time as a starter for the next batch. Quality improves with each setting.

There is a second milk preparation, similar to yogurt but with the texture of a soft, spongy cheese. *Paneer* is, in fact, India's only indigenous cheese. The making of any other was forbidden, as it would involve the use of rennet

as a coagulant. Rennet is "the lining membrane of the fourth stomach of unweaned mammals; particularly the prepared contents from the lining membrane of a young calf." No further explanation is necessary.

Paneer— Indian Cheese

In a medium-sized saucepan, heat 2 pints of whole milk. Stir constantly to prevent scum forming on the top. When it reaches a gentle boil, remove from fire and gradually stir in the juice of one small lemon. Stir gently until the milk is completely curdled (the necessary amount of lemon juice will vary) . Leave covered for 15 minutes.

Line a large kitchen strainer with a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth and set over a bowl. Pour in the curdled milk. Fold the edges of the cloth over the solid portions that remain in it. Set a weight (perhaps a small pan of water) on top of the folded cloth. Press out all water in the cheese and leave it under the weight to solidify for at least 1 hour.

The water (or whey) that drips into the bowl can be used for preparing rice or gravies. The cheese, when it solidifies, can be cut into cubes or wedges, lightly dusted with white or chick-pea flour, gently fried in butter, and served with peas, cauliflower, or pieces of any vegetable for an interesting addition to taste and texture.

Last and perhaps most revered of all the five immortal nectars is the multipurpose clarified butter. So pure was it considered that many a caste-conscious Hindu based his decision about whether or not to eat a food upon its being cooked in *ghee*. If it was not, the food was symbolically raw; though it had actually been cooked, it was still vulnerable to any sort of defilement or contamination by those of another caste. But if it was cooked in ghee, the food was cooked symbolically as well, protected by the purity of the ghee from any possible physical or caste contamination. At times, it was even permissible to accept

food from an outcaste if the food had been prepared in ghee.

Of course, part of the passion for clarified butter is based upon sound, practical reasoning. Ghee, properly made, will not spoil, even under the most adverse conditions. (At one period in history it was fashionable to mature it from eleven up to one hundred years.) Likewise, foods cooked or preserved in ghee are unlikely to spoil quickly. The butter also acts as a lubricant for food which may otherwise be difficult to swallow; and it refuses to burn despite the long cooking over high heat that Indian cuisine often demands.

Still, it is the religious, healing attraction of the sacred cow itself that imbues clarified butter with such appeal. Some saints are said to have existed in ancient India on clarified butter alone. Ghee mixed with yogurt has always been considered a healthy and satisfying meal in itself.

Ghee—like the other immortal nectars—has a multitude of uses apart from the palate. It was constantly offered to the gods—directly, by pouring into the sacrificial fire, and indirectly, by feeding a Brahmin priest with it until he could consume no more. It was recommended for pregnant women, rubbed on children's heads, rubbed on statues of deities to make them shine, and otherwise used in every imaginable circumstance that required sanctification and purification.

How to Make Clarified Butter

Cut one pound of unsalted butter into quarter-pound pieces. Heat it in a large, heavy saucepan over medium heat. Turn constantly with a wooden spoon to avoid burning. When it is completely melted, increase the heat and bring to a boil. Continue boiling until white foam covers the butter. Stir once. Reduce heat to lowest possible (an asbestos pad is helpful here) . Simmer uncovered without stirring for 45 minutes, or until butter is clear and

particles on bottom are golden brown. (Beware of overcooking and burning them.)

Line a large strainer with a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth and place over a large bowl. Strain the butter through it very slowly. If necessary, strain again to remove all solid particles; any remaining particles will cause ghee to go rancid. One pound of butter should yield 1½ cups of ghee.

Sealed in a jar or crock and kept in a cool place or refrigerated, the ghee can be stored for 2 to 3 months.

Sun of the Hindus
Lord of Chitor
Ornament of the Thirty-six Royal Races

The Hindus yield unanimous suffrage to the ruler of Udaipur as the legitimate heir to the throne of Lord Rama, and call him "Sun of the Hindus." In olden times when in the monsoon the sun remained concealed under the clouds and covered by mountains, the people refused to eat their meals unless they saw their King in lieu of the hidden sun. The King, therefore, used to appear in his balcony to satisfy the desire of his people to have a glimpse of him before they cook their food.

—*Ruling Princes and Chiefs of India, nineteenth century*

Two

Udaipur

The ancient dynasty of Udaipur is recognized by all other maharajas as the paramount royal house of India. The rulers of this lovely, lake-filled kingdom are believed to have descended directly from the sun. Among his many names, the ruler of Udaipur counts as his true surname the title "Sesodia," derived from the word *sisa,* which means "lead." The origin of this title is yet another chapter in the culinary history of Rajasthan, told here by the bards themselves:

In these wilds, an ancient ruler of Udaipur had sat down to a feast consisting of the game slain in the chase; and being very hungry, he hastily swallowed a piece of meat to which a gadfly adhered. The fly grievously tormented the ruler's stomach, and he sent for a physician.

This wise man secretly ordered an attendant to cut off the tip of a cow's ear, as the only means of saving the monarch's life. On obtaining this forbidden morsel, the wise man folded it in a piece of thin cloth, and, attaching a string to it, made the royal patient swallow it. The gadfly fastened on the bait and was dragged to light.

The Maharaja of Udaipur
and attendants.

The physician was rewarded but the curious King insisted on knowing by what means the cure was effected, and when he heard that a piece of sacred cow had passed his lips, he determined to expiate the enormity in a manner which its heinousness required, and to swallow boiling lead, which in that language is called *sisa*. A vessel was put on the fire, and half a kilo soon melted, whence, praying that his involuntary offence might be forgiven, he boldly drank it off. But lo! It passed through him like

water. From that day, the name of the tribe was changed to "Sesodia."

—Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*

And culinary history was made, though it must be said that the people of Udaipur have not made *sisa* a regular bill of fare. They have, however, some other unusual means of utilizing edibles. Turmeric, for example, they employed as a colouring agent not only in their food but also in their frequent battles. Before consigning their women to the furnace and donning their battle-unto-death robes, these stalwart warriors would smear themselves from head to foot with golden turmeric paste, thus dedicating their deaths to Mahadeo, a local deity of the same yellow colour.

Conditions in Udaipur, in the whole of Rajasthan, have always been such. In food, as in life, one got what one could and that was usually sparse. There were none of the luxuries of the Mughal court: saffron, almonds, and cream. The cuisine was a desert one—simple and straightforward—with a flavour that came from the land.

Sulas

Typical of Udaipur cuisine are these smoky, tender fillets. The name is as ancient as the desert itself, and derives from an age-old tradition. A beast so young that its teeth were just cut would be sacrificed to the gods and roasted whole on a spit. Succulent morsels were then offered to the deity and what remained was given to the participants. The sacrifice was called the *sulagava,* and the word for the spit, *sula,* was given to the dish itself.

Three hours before cooking, pour the yogurt into a large strainer lined with a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth and set over a bowl to drain. (Two cups of waterless yogurt will be required.) Also put the dried fruit to soak in ¼ cup water.

4 *cups unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with a fork*
1 *cup dried apricots or figs, coarsely chopped with a greased knife*

2 lbs. lean shoulder or leg of lamb, cut into thin fillets, or 2 lbs. fillets of firm, white freshwater fish, cut into strips 1½ inches wide

If using lamb, cut the fillets into strips 1½ inches wide. Pound these strips as thin as possible with the back of a knife. (Do not pound fish.) Place meat or fish in a heavy, medium-sized pot that can be tightly lidded. Reserve.

⅔ cup clarified butter
1 cup onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices
2 Tbs. minced garlic
2 Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root
1½–3 tsp. ground hot red pepper (to taste)
½ tsp. powdered cardamom
1 tsp. turmeric
1 Tbs. powdered coriander
1 Tbs. salt

In a small skillet, heat the butter and fry the onions until quite brown and crisp. Remove with a slotted spoon, pressing out as much butter as possible. Reserve the butter. Crumble the onions into the blender jar. Add in all the remaining ingredients in this section, with the prepared yogurt and fruits. Blend to a fine paste. Transfer this paste into the meat pot and knead it thoroughly into the meat or fish.

Turn a small burner of the stove to high and place a charcoal briquette on it. Leave it there until white ash appears.

If the meat is to be cooked over live coals, they should be lighted at this point and left until white ash covers them all (about 1 hour).

3 cloves
½ tsp. reserved basting butter

Make a cup of aluminium foil just large enough to hold the briquette. Make a well in the marinating meat and place the cup in it. Using tongs, transfer the burning briquette into the cup. Keep the pot lid close by. Place the cloves on the briquette. When they begin to smoulder, quickly drop the butter on them and cover the pot immediately. Do not open for at least one hour. The smoky flavour will impregnate the meat.

Twenty minutes before serving, thread the meat or fish very closely on thin skewers. Grill 3 inches from the white coals or 3 inches from hottest possible broiler with the skewers resting on an open-meshed rack placed across a large baking pan. Baste occasionally with the reserved butter, turning until the meat is tender inside and crisp and brown outside. Fish will take 10 to 15 minutes; meat 15 to 20. Season generously with lime.

remaining reserved butter
fresh lime to taste

SERVES 4

Dessert for a Dear and Heavy Heart
(Diljani)

Udaipur is a magical kingdom, for it lies in the midst of desert lands and yet it is filled with lakes. By day the waters of these lakes shimmer in the sun like a woman's shining hair, flowing about the royal city, soothing and protecting its palaces and gardens. But by night it is said these same waters become melancholy tresses of tears, shed by the ever-sorrowing queen who lives in the palace on high. She weeps for her daughter whom, everyone knows, the king sacrificed to his stern code of honour. So fair was this princess that her father's two allies, the strongest kings in the land, had sworn to do battle for her hand in marriage, and amassed their armies on the plain. Long did he ponder, looking over the plain and searching for another solution, but he could no longer risk this battle of brother princes, and so the fatal order was issued. The daughter of the king obeyed his will without question. Though it took three draughts to quell her spirit, the young princess drank down her cup. And thus the matter was settled . . . except in the heart of the queen. To lighten her sorrow, the people of Udaipur created this magical potion.

Sift the flour into a large jug or measuring pitcher. Beating constantly with a balloon whisk or fork, and add 2 cups water very slowly until it is used up and the batter is smooth and light. Stir in the melted butter and let it sit while preparing syrup. (The longer it sits, the lighter it will be.)

1¼ cups chick-pea flour
1 tsp. clarified butter, melted
pinch of saffron or drop of yellow food colouring

1 *cup granulated sugar*

In a medium-sized saucepan, stir sugar with 1 cup water over high heat until it dissolves. Continue boiling for about 5 minutes or until it forms a single thread when pressed lightly between thumb and forefinger. Remove to a trivet placed next to the stove and stir in the colouring or saffron.

4 *cups clarified butter (no less, for the batter must absorb this amount)*
2 *Tbs. slivered, blanched, unsalted almonds*
2 *Tbs. slivered, blanched, unsalted pistachios*
seeds of 8 *cardamom pods*

Heat the butter to crackling in a wok or skillet just large enough to hold it. Hold a colander just over the pan and pour into it about 2 Tbs. of the batter, shaking gently. The droplets of batter will form and set in the butter. They should be removed with a slotted spoon as soon as they are golden and immediately put to soak in the sugar syrup. Continue this procedure until the batter is finished. Garnish with all remaining ingredients. Serve hot.

SERVES 6

Undecipherable Dip
(Bahadur Shahi Dahi)

The rulers of Udaipur stood apart from other maharajas for their courage, their nobility, and their pride. But in one respect, they were no different from their fellows; they delighted in confounding an innocent soul. Neither rank nor dignity was spared their pranks, nor was any occasion too sacred. At the lavish banquets of Udaipur's brother princes, brilliant birds burst from tiny fried breads; live ducks paddled about in watery centerpieces (while English ladies swooned). Perhaps as a means of keeping up this standard, the Udaipur rulers amused themselves on occasion by concocting dishes to bewilder the palate. The following is one of the simplest and tastiest; an excellent spread or dip.

4 *cups unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with fork*

Two hours before serving, pour the yogurt into a large strainer lined with a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth. Set over a bowl to drip. (Two cups of waterless yogurt will be required.)

Place the liver in a small saucepan. Add salt and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil. Skim. Reduce heat and simmer uncovered until the liver is quite firm (about 15 minutes). Drain off the water; cool and cut the liver into very fine, short slivers, like grains of rice.

When yogurt is completely dry, put it into a large mixing bowl and whip smooth with a balloon whisk or beater. Add small dashes of milk as necessary until the yogurt is the consistency of thick mayonnaise. Beat in all the remaining ingredients, adding salt and sugar slowly until it is pungent to taste. Finally, incorporate the riced liver and allow it to sit as long as possible. Serve at room temperature as an excellent dip for raw vegetables.

¼ *lb. lamb (or calf) liver*
1 *tsp. salt*

½ *tsp. ground hot red pepper*
1–2 *tsp. prepared mustard powder*
2 *Tbs. seedless raisins, soaked soft and drained*
salt to taste
sugar to taste

SERVES 8–10

Three-Stage Overindulgence

(Dahi Samosa Maz)

A venerable old nobleman of Udaipur state once made the following statement: "There are three precious things no man may ask of a Rajput: his sword, his mistress, and his horse." A fourth, the family recipes, he discreetly omitted, but the same taboo applies to those treasures. One may request an old recipe, but one may not expect to receive it. They are family secrets, those recipes, as closely guarded as the ladies of the harem. We were surprised, therefore, when the very same old noble disclosed to us this one secret of his family kitchen—on promise of faithful reproduction. The highly seasoned sauce he uses in this dish is indigenous to Rajasthan, but bottled Worcestershire is a good substitute and lends the dish a distinctive taste. Like all great recipes, this one takes time, but the result is a fine meal in itself—a combination of meat, meat-filled pastry, and sauce, unique in Rajasthan cuisine.

At least 3 hours before eating, pour the yogurt into a large strainer, lined with a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth. Set over a bowl to drip. (One cup waterless yogurt will be required.)

2 *cups unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with a fork*

MEAT

2½ Tbs. minced garlic
2 Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root

Meanwhile pulverize garlic and ginger in blender with ¼ cup water. Scrape into a cup and reserve next to the stove. Remove 1 tsp. of this paste and set aside for use in the filling.

6 Tbs. clarified butter
1 cup onions, cut in half from top to root, across the grain into thin, even slices
2 tsp. fenugreek seeds, or 2 tsp. cumin seeds

Heat butter in medium saucepan. Keep its lid close by. Sauté onions until just browning. Push them to one side of the pan. Turn up heat and drop in fenugreek seeds. Cover pot immediately and shake it over fire for 1 minute. Uncover. Add garlic and ginger paste. Stir until khaki colour, adding 2 Tbs. water whenever necessary to prevent sticking. Remove from heat when ready.

1 Tbs. slivered, blanched, unsalted almonds
1 tsp. ground hot red pepper
1 tsp. salt
2 tsp. powdered coriander
¼ cup unsweetened powdered or condensed milk
½ cup unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with fork

Place 1 cup of water next to the stove. In a small bowl, mix together all the ingredients in this section. Stir them into the onion pan. Return to medium heat and continue stirring and turning with spatula for 5–10 minutes. Add 2 Tbs. water whenever necessary to prevent sticking until the whole cup of water has been added.

1 lb. lean, boneless lamb, cut into 2-inch cubes
3 Tbs. Worcestershire sauce
2 cups hot water

When all the water has been added, put in the meat. Stir until its liquid has evaporated. Add Worcestershire sauce. Stir. Add 2 cups hot water. Reduce heat. Cover and simmer until tender.

PASTRY FILLING

3 Tbs. vegetable oil
2 Tbs. coarsely chopped onion
1 tsp. garlic paste, reserved from blender

Meanwhile preheat oven to 250° F. and begin the filling. In a small saucepan, heat oil and fry onions until just browning. Take off heat. Mix together all remaining ingredients in this section and put in onion pan. Return to medium heat and fry, turning constantly, until the paste is brown and free of the raw smell of spices. Add 1 cup water and

cook until it is completely evaporated. Remove from heat.

2½ tsp. powdered coriander
1½ tsp. salt
1 lb. ground lamb

Stir all the ingredients in this section into the minced meat. Cover and reserve in the preheated oven.

2 Tbs. seedless raisins
2 Tbs. minced fresh mint, or 1½ tsp. dried mint
2 Tbs. scraped and julienned ginger root
½ cup minced onion
2½ Tbs. Worcestershire sauce
2½ Tbs. white vinegar

Check the cooking meat pieces for tenderness. Stir and add water as necessary. When meat is completely tender, place pot in oven and reserve for final assembly.

Mix the flour, salt, and red pepper in a large pie tin. Make a well in their center. Heat the oil in a tiny saucepan. Tip it and fry onions in the oil until they are brown and crisp. Pour both oil and onions into the flour well. Cool. Rub flour and oil between tips of fingers until the mixture flakes. Gather the flour together and slowly add water until the flour forms a compact ball. Knead until the dough is quite malleable and no longer sticky. Divide into 16 equal balls.

PASTRY
1 cup all-purpose flour
¼ tsp. salt
pinch ground red pepper
3 Tbs. vegetable oil
1 Tbs. chopped onion

On a lightly floured surface, roll out the balls into as thin a circle as possible (about 2 inches in diameter). Spoon ½ Tbs. minced-meat filling into the center of each. Moisten the edges of the circles with a wet finger. Fold them in half over the filling. Press rounded edges together firmly. As close to serving time as possible, deep-fry these pastries, a few at a time, until they are golden and crisp. Reserve in preheated oven.

vegetable oil for frying, to fill a saucepan to a depth of 3 inches

In a mixing bowl, beat the reserved yogurt and sugar with a fork or balloon whisk until fluffy and as thick as

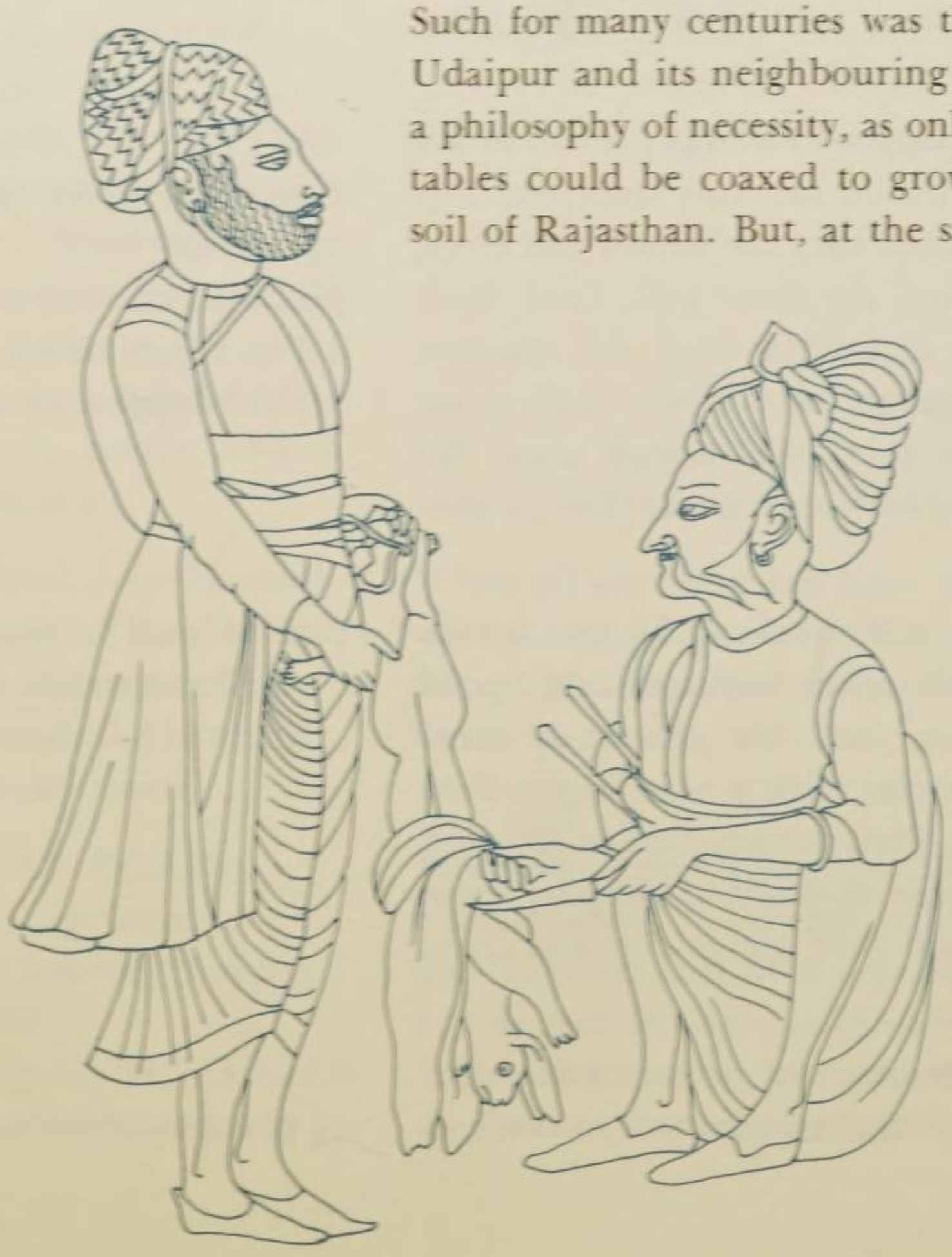
SAUCE
½ cup powdered sugar

1 *cup reserved, waterless yogurt*	mayonnaise. Reserve until final assembly.
FINAL ASSEMBLY	Just before serving, ladle meat pieces into one large or several individual serving bowls. Top with filled pastries and finally with a large daub of yogurt and sugar. Serve immediately. Serve with a green vegetable.
SERVES 6	

Rajput Rabbit Food
(Khuda Khargosh)

Eat flesh and you will grow stout;
eat butter and you will grow strong;
eat greens and you will grow pot-bellied
and have no strength at all.

—Proverb of Rajasthan



Such for many centuries was the philosophy of eating in Udaipur and its neighbouring states. In a sense, this was a philosophy of necessity, as only one or two stalwart vegetables could be coaxed to grow regularly in the difficult soil of Rajasthan. But, at the same time, it was a philoso-

phy born of the character of the people. They were warriors who proved over and over again that they preferred death to subjugation and who passed the time when they were not at war moving in a leisurely cycle from summer to winter to monsoon palace, from hunt to bed to table to hunt. Any staunch old warrior of this blood would relish a well-cooked rabbit, but look with scorn upon the rabbit's food or any form of vegetable. He would consider the following recipe a more than complete meal and would go to great pains to prepare it, wrapping the stuffed hare first in banana leaves, next in a thick, flat, wheaten bread, and finally in layers of mud-soaked cloth, before committing it to cook in a narrow ditch, heated with one hundred and fifty dried cow-dung cakes, exactly as prescribed by tradition.

At least 4 hours before serving, heat the clarified butter in a small skillet and fry the onions until brown and quite crisp. Remove with a slotted spoon, pressing out as much butter as possible. Crumble onto paper toweling. Reserve the butter for basting. Put all the remaining ingredients in this section into the blender and blend to as fine a powder as possible. Add the crumbled onions and blend for five seconds.

MARINADE

½ cup clarified butter
1 cup onions, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices
seeds of 14 cardamom pods, or 1 tsp. powdered cardamom
12 cloves, or ½ tsp. powdered cloves
4 inches of cinnamon stick, or 1 tsp. powdered cinnamon
½ tsp. mace blades (three)
½ tsp. powdered nutmeg

Add all the ingredients in this section to the other ingredients in the blender. Blend and scrape until the whole is reduced to a fine paste. (Add 1 Tbs. more Worcestershire sauce, if necessary, to lubricate blender.)

1–2 tsp. ground hot red pepper (to taste)
2 Tbs. powdered coriander

½ *tsp. saffron threads, heated and crumbled*
1 *tsp. salt*
4 *Tbs. dried apricots or figs, minced with a greased knife*
1 *Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root*
1 *Tbs. minced garlic*
6 *Tbs. Worcestershire sauce*

2- *to 3-lb. rabbit or hare (wild or domestic), skinned and dressed with head intact*

Prick the rabbit all over with a fork. Rub inside and out with the blender paste. Let sit as long as possible unrefrigerated (overnight, if refrigerated).

STUFFING
½ *cup white long-grained rice*
1 *tsp. salt*
oil for frying
1 *lb. ground lamb (or beef)*
1 *cup finely chopped onion*
1 *Tbs. seeded and minced green chili pepper*
¼ *cup scraped and minced ginger root*
¼ *cup seedless raisins*
½ *cup coarsely chopped unsalted almonds or cashews*
1 *tsp. salt*

Three and a half hours before serving, preheat oven to 400° and prepare stuffing. In a small saucepan, bring ¾ cup water to a rolling boil. Sprinkle in the rice and salt and continue to boil, uncovered, without stirring, until the rice begins to stick on the bottom. Cover and leave to steam off heat. Pour the oil into a medium-sized skillet to cover the bottom and heat over a medium flame. Quickly brown the ground meat. Off the heat, add the half-cooked rice and all the remaining ingredients listed in this section. Toss lightly with a fork and stuff into the cavity of the rabbit. Stitch the stomach so that nothing can escape and truss the legs tightly against the body. Force a wooden spoon through the mouth and down the throat of the rabbit until only a bit is visible through the mouth. Wrap the entire rabbit in a double thickness of aluminum foil, leaving the ends open at the head. Crimp all the other edges firmly. Place the rabbit in a roasting pan so that its head remains up and resting on the side of the pan, to prevent the juices from running out. Put the pan into the preheated oven and roast at 400° for thirty minutes. Reduce the heat to 250° and roast for two and a

half hours. During the last half hour, force a bulb baster filled with the reserved onion butter and drippings through the mouth into the stomach. (This should not be difficult because the spoon has allowed the cavity to remain slightly open.) Remove the cooked rabbit to a heated platter and either serve whole or, more attractively, in pieces surrounded with the stuffing.

SERVES 4 TO 6

Although at meal time fate provide
a richly loaded plate,
No food will reach the mouth unless
the hand cooperate.

—Panchatantra

Third Hand Bread

(Chapati)

In India, this little bread is like a third hand. Not only is it a scoop for food when eaten, as it is, with the fingers, but it also complements both the taste and the texture of the food it scoops up, absorbing runny sauces, balancing strong flavours, and pleasing the palate with its warmth and smoothness.

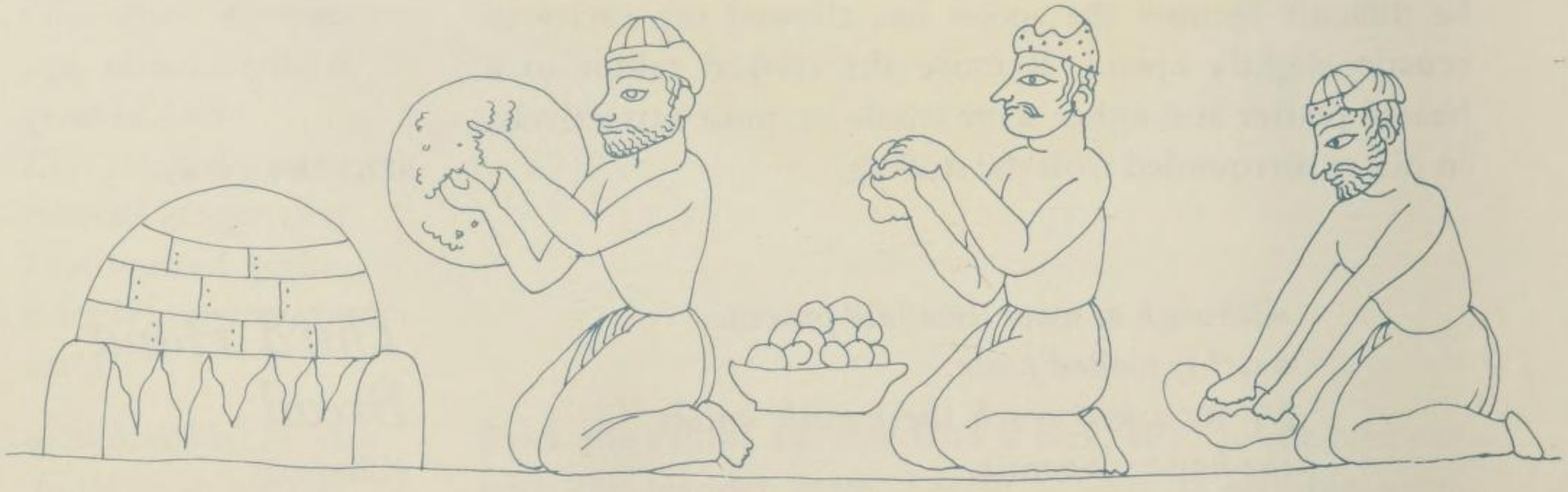
1 cup whole-wheat flour
¼–½ cup water

At least 1 hour before cooking, pour the flour into a deep mixing bowl. Make a well in the center and pour in ¼ cup water. Gather the flour into a ball, squeezing and pressing. Add up to ¼ cup more water (by spoonfuls) until the flour adheres easily, but is not pasty or sticky. Punch and press it for a few seconds with the knuckles.

Transfer the dough to a lightly floured surface and continue punching, pressing, and folding for 10–15 minutes or until the dough is quite smooth and elastic. Set the smooth ball aside to rest for at least 30 minutes, covered with a damp cloth.

¼ cup whole-wheat flour for rolling board

About 20 minutes before eating, preheat the oven to warm. Divide the dough into 5 equal balls and roll each of these into a 6-inch flat circle, dusting with flour as necessary. Cover each with a damp towel when it is ready.



Heat a large, heavy iron or nonstick skillet or griddle until a drop of water dances on it. Do not grease it. One by one, toast the breads—about a minute on each side (or until dark spots begin to show). Move the bread almost constantly with fingertips but turn only once. When the second side is toasted, press it gently but firmly with a folded cloth for 1 second. Remove the cloth. The bread will puff. Immediately transfer to the oven. Eat as soon as possible.

MAKES 5 BREADS
SERVING 2–3

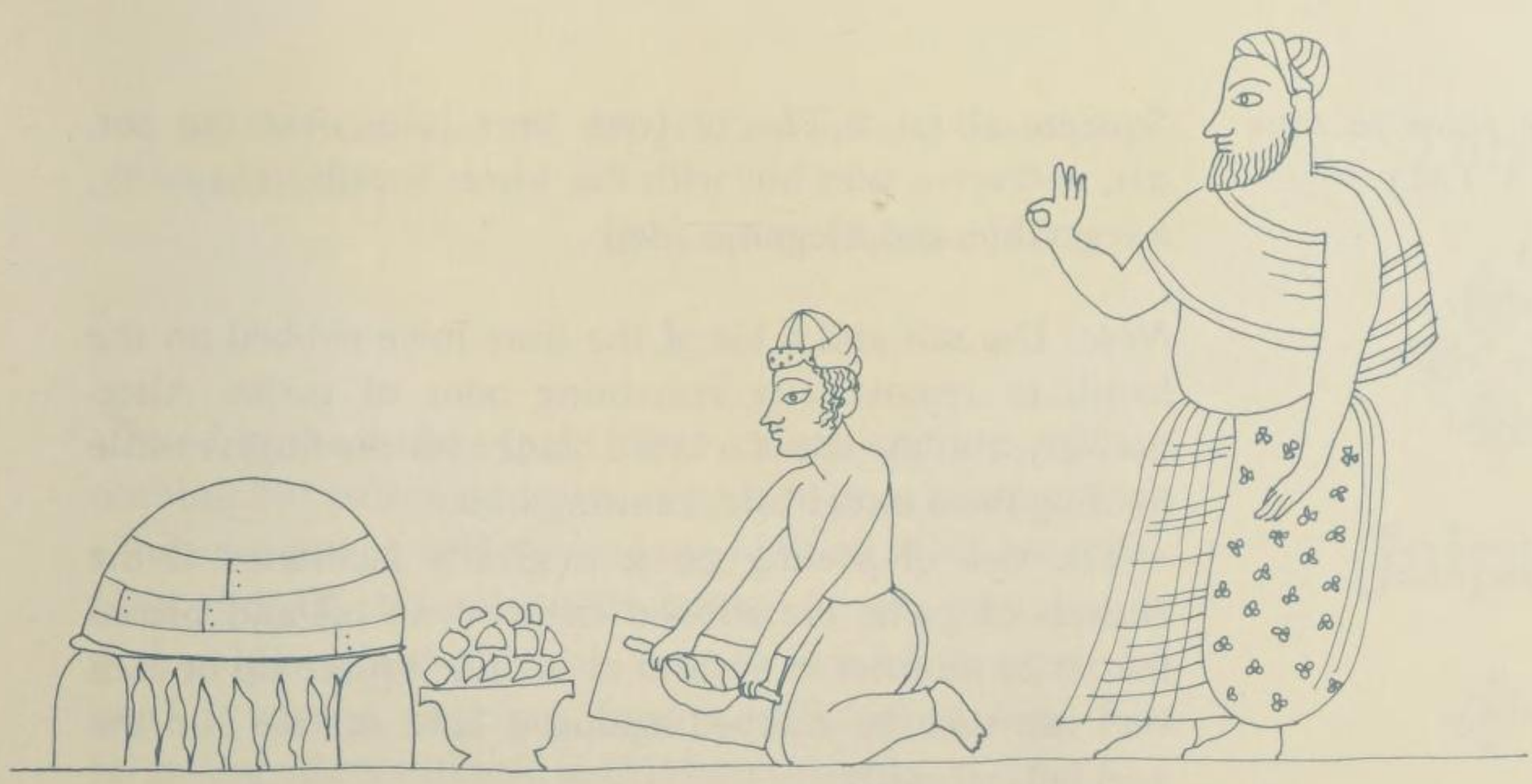
A king must be happy;
A wheaten bread must be fresh.
—Proverb of Western India

Chicken Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts

(Murgi ka Kima)

The Taj Mahal does not lie in Udaipur—or even in Rajasthan—but the origin of the recipe and the moral of this story do:

Once upon a time—not so very long ago—a certain lord of the British Empire, then doing his stint in India, suggested that the famous Taj Mahal might best be put up at public auction and sold for the value of its marble. In the wake of this proposal (which was respectfully overruled)



many were left to ponder anew the ancient idea that the value of the whole may be greater than the sum of its parts.

This is a lesson well remembered in regard to this modest recipe.

Whirl the garlic, ginger, and onion to a fine paste in the blender, using only as much water as necessary to facilitate grinding. Reserve.

1 tsp. minced garlic
2 tsp. minced onion
1 tsp. scraped and minced ginger root

In a heavy, medium-sized saucepan, heat the butter almost to smoking. Keep the lid of the pot close by. Drop in the cloves, close the pot immediately, and shake it over the fire for 1 minute. Open, remove the cloves with a slotted spoon, and discard. Fry the onions golden in the same butter.

⅓ cup clarified butter
12 cloves
1 cup onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices

When they are just golden, add the chicken and salt. Stir and turn with the spatula for 5 minutes. Add the turmeric. Continue stirring for 10 minutes. Do not add any water. Add the minced garlic, onion, and ginger and cook uncovered until tender (never add water).

1½–2 cups freshly ground chicken
1 tsp. turmeric
1 tsp. minced garlic
2 tsp. minced onion
1 tsp. scraped and minced ginger root

fresh lime juice to taste (about 3 Tbs.)

SERVES 2–3

Squeeze about 3 Tbs. of fresh lime juice over the pot, stir, and serve very hot with flat wheat breads (*chapatis*), a vegetable, and a legume (*dal*).

Note: Use salt and a bit of the lime juice rubbed on the hands to remove any remaining odor of garlic. Alternatively, run the flat of a knife blade over the fingers while holding them under cold, running water.

The task of peeling garlic is greatly facilitated if the clusters of garlic are rubbed lightly with oil and placed for 15–20 minutes in a warm oven. The square tip of each bud can then be stubbed against a hard surface and the peel falls off easily.

She has eaten of the Mughal's food and cannot leave him. . . .

—Proverb of Western India

Three

Jaipur

Stand in the midst of the Jaipur palace, and you will see nothing but palace for miles. But stand on a parapet, high above the palace, and you can see nothing at all for miles. How did all this splendour spring up on such barren plains? How did this wealth come to such bleak surroundings? It sprang, they say, from a well-cooked dish. The following tale is still told to children at meals.

Long before Jaipur was known as a kingdom, its lands were held by tribal chiefs. One such chief expired, but left an infant son, who was deprived of his throne by an uncle. The mother of the boy, though a tribal queen herself, set out in dirty rags to seek justice for him. After hunger and travail, she came upon a palace, built upon the site of the present-day Jaipur palace. Humbling herself, she begged employment, and was admitted to a place among the slaves.

By and by, the palace king, tired of desert fare, called for something different on his table. The meal that came was so superb that the king demanded knowledge of its maker, who was, of course, the exiled queen. She came before the king and told her tale. Taking pity on her plight, he adopted her as his sister. They ate happily ever after in the palace. Her son, who was adopted as a nephew of the king, acquired the throne and founded Jaipur state.

Today one of the most famous states in Rajasthan, Jaipur has fabulous riches, gleaned from every corner of India. The treasures of its kitchens are preserved to this day, guarded by a mantle of tradition. They are also guarded —as we discovered—by one very clever cook. This gen-

tleman had retired from the palace to open his own restaurant. When we approached him to discuss some of Jaipur's famous pullaos, he promised to write them out for us. All he needed was twenty-five rupees to purchase paper and pencil. That is the last we saw of him; his brother runs the restaurant now. We had to find our pullaos elsewhere, wiser in the ways of the world.

Meat with Imperial Almond Sauce
(Kaliya Badami)

When a vassal of Jaipur state wished to honour His Highness or flatter him into granting a favour, high on the list of presentables were elephants and dancing girls. Jewelled swords came close behind and almonds were on a par with them, each one wrapped in silver or gold. The almonds were good for Her Highness as well, adding lustre to her fine, fair complexion. Ground with salt and pepper, they made excellent toothpaste, but mixed with meat, they reached their true perfection. So valuable were the almonds that at one time they were small coinage of the Mughal realm. Almonds on the table marked imperial cuisine, as in this rich, saucy dish of lamb.

½ cup clarified butter
2½ lbs. lamb or mutton (preferably shoulder), cut into 3-inch chunks
1½ Tbs. coarse salt crystals

In a large, heavy casserole, heat the butter until it crackles. Mix salt and meat together. Divide into two portions and brown one portion at a time. Return all meat to the pot and set aside off heat.

¼ cup scraped and minced ginger root
4 tsp. powdered cumin
¼ tsp. coriander seed
½–1½ Tbs. ground hot red chili pepper (to taste)

Mix together all ingredients in this section and tie in a cheesecloth bag. Pound the bag with a heavy utensil to bruise the spices within. Add the bag to the cooking pot. Cover with 5 cups water. Bring to a boil, skim, and reduce heat to simmer. Simmer uncovered for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, purée almonds in blender with ½ cup of the yogurt and ½ cup of the simmering meat broth. Mix this purée with the remaining yogurt and stir into the simmering meat. Continue to simmer uncovered until the meat is completely tender and the sauce semithick and golden. Remove and cool the spice bag. Squeeze its juices into the pot. Discard its contents.

Garnish with almonds and lime wedges and serve hot over plain, white rice.

½ cup blanched, unsalted almonds
2 cups unflavoured yogurt

2 Tbs. slivered and toasted blanched, unsalted almonds
wedges of lime

SERVES 4–6

When you garnish with lime, remember this tale—a true romance of Rajasthan: Once upon a time, a little boy was caught with a lime. His father, outraged, demanded to know the source of the stolen fruit. Upon hearing "the cave," he uttered an oath and struck his son dead on the spot. "If you will steal a lime from the garden of the cave, you will steal from the cave itself. Shame and dishonour will visit our people. Better you should die a boy."

Both father and son were Minas by birth, guardians of a hidden treasure. For generations their tribe was entrusted with the wealth of the Jaipur throne. It was kept in a cave, and only they knew the secret entrance; Jaipur rulers were led there blindfolded. Once in his lifetime, the ruler might enter to survey this incredible wealth. From all that he saw, he might take away one piece, but he must leave another piece in its place. Never so much as a seed pearl was touched by the Minas themselves. Honour meant more than worldly wealth; death for the theft of a lime.

The Emperor's Apples
(Seb ka Halva)

For many, many years, the maharajas of Jaipur served as generals to the Mughal Emperors. As a result, many of the treasures of a more luxurious way of life fell into the maharajas' hands—jewels, spices, women . . . and apples. These apples, great delicacies, came from the north to the Jaipur deserts, with a touching story:

When the Mughal Emperor, Shah Jehan, was a young man recently crowned, a wandering ascetic begged audience in his court and placed jewel-like red apples in his hands. "Life and fortune will be with you, O excellent Emperor, till the smell of these apples leaves your hands." So saying, the old wise man disappeared into the crowd. But Shah Jehan never forgot. Through the days of his love for a beautiful young wife, through the building of the Taj Mahal, and even during imprisonment at the hands of his son, he guarded that fleeting fragrance. But when vanity drove him to aphrodisiacs in excess and he fell into motionless sleep, those who had protected and served Shah Jehan knew the scent had left his old hands forever.

Maharajas of Jaipur think of Shah Jehan when they eat this sweet, fragrant dessert.

¼ cup seedless raisins
¼ tsp. saffron threads
2 Tbs. rose-water

Put raisins to soak in water to cover. Crumble saffron threads and muddle in rose-water.

4 large, red apples, crisp and tart
½ cup unsalted butter

No more than 15 minutes before serving this dish, peel, halve, and seed the apples. Drop them into a bowl of water mixed with 1 tsp. lemon juice. In a wok or small skillet, heat the butter until it foams. Take the pan off heat.

½ cup half and half
4–6 Tbs. sugar (to taste)
¼ cup slivered, blanched, unsalted almonds

Hold a fine grater over the pan. Quickly grate the apples directly into it. Return the pan to low heat. Cook, stirring, until all excess liquid is evaporated. Apples should be moist and golden. Drain the raisins. Add them with

"Without sweets a dinner is like a widow." (Bengali sweet-vendor's song.)

the saffron water and all remaining ingredients. Continue stirring until apples are the consistency of very thick applesauce. Serve hot in tiny bowls. (Pass with brandy and cream, for an excellent blend of East and West.)

Note: Do not grate apples in the blender; the consistency is entirely different.

½ *tsp. powdered cardamom*

SERVES 4

A Fruit Pullao

(Motan Jan Pullao)

His majesty looks upon fruits as one of the greatest gifts of the Creator, and pays much attention to them. The horticulturists of Iran and Turan have, therefore, settled in Jaipur, and the cultivation of trees is a flourishing occupation. Melons and grapes have become very plentiful and excellent; and watermelons, peaches, almonds, pistachios, and pomegranates are everywhere to be found. Ever since the conquest of Kabul, Qandshar, and Kashmir, loads of

fruits are imported; throughout the whole year, the stores of the dealers are full and the bazaars well supplied.

—*Ain-i-Akbar,*
from the reign of Akbar, the great Mughal,
sixteenth century

The exquisite dried fruits and nuts that came down to India from the far north, beyond the Himalayas, were precious to the Mughals not only in gold but in memories of their homeland as well. In themselves these fruits were a fitting gift for a king. Mixed with flowers and distilled into a heady liquour, they were a gift sure to merit a rich gift in return; but reverently steamed in this saffron pullao —no poem could express such bliss.

1 *cup white, long-grain rice (not precooked)*
1 *lb. lamb shanks, cut with the bone into 2-inch cubes*
6 *cardamom pods, slightly crushed*
2 *inches of cinnamon stick*
½ *tsp. turmeric*
1 *Tbs. fresh lime juice (grate and reserve lime rind before juicing)*
1 *tsp. salt*

At least one hour before cooking, wash the rice till the water runs clear. Leave to soak in water to cover. Place shanks in medium-sized pot and cover with 5 cups water. Bring to a boil and skim. Add all remaining ingredients in this section. Partially cover and boil gently for 1 hour or until shanks are completely tender.

1 *cup granulated sugar*
¼ *tsp. powdered saffron*
1 *Tbs. fresh lime juice*
½ *cup orange juice*
3 *Tbs. seedless raisins*

Meanwhile pour sugar into a small saucepan. Add ½ cup water and boil for 15 minutes. Off heat, stir in remaining ingredients in this section. Set aside.

Preheat oven to 350° F.

When meat is tender, remove it with a slotted spoon and

place on paper towelling. Measure the remaining broth and correct to 2 cups. Bring this to a boil in the same saucepan. Sprinkle in drained rice and cook uncovered until all liquid is absorbed. (Stir with fork if necessary.) Cover and set aside off heat.

In a medium-sized, oven-proof casserole, heat the butter and fry the precooked meat and nuts for 2–3 minutes, turning constantly with spatula. Off heat, carefully stir in the apricots, lime rind, and rice with a fork. Mix thoroughly. Dribble the reserved orange-sugar syrup down all sides of the casserole.

Return to heat and bring to a boil. Cover the casserole with foil, crimping edges to seal. Put in preheated oven for 15–20 minutes or until all liquid is absorbed and rice is completely tender. Fluff with fork and serve immediately or hold in warm (250°) oven.

To reheat the pullao, sprinkle over it 2 Tbs. water. Seal and place in warm oven.

Serve with a plain, fresh vegetable and perhaps a Raita (see page 295) to balance the sweetness.

¼ cup clarified butter
2 Tbs. blanched, unsalted almonds
2 Tbs. blanched, unsalted pistachios
2 Tbs. dried apricots, coarsely chopped with a greased knife
1½ Tbs. grated lime rind (see first step)

SERVES 4

Bread unseasoned is not good, nor hair unbraided.
—Proverb of Rajasthan

Well-Behaved Bread

(Bahadur Shahi Roti)

This little bread is more of a snack than accompaniment to a meal. It is excellent hot, but loses much when it cools.

One hour before cooking, pour yogurt into a strainer lined with a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth. Place the strainer over a bowl and leave until all the

1 cup unflavoured yogurt

water has dripped out. (One-half cup of waterless yogurt will be required.)

5 *Tbs. chick-pea flour*
1 *tsp. salt*
¼ *tsp. ground hot red chili pepper*
3 *Tbs. powdered coriander*
½ *tsp. powdered cloves*
pinch of powdered cardamom
¼ *cup minced onion*
3 *egg yolks, beaten*

In a small, ungreased skillet, shake the flour over a medium fire until it is khaki coloured and fragrant. Off heat mix in the dry yogurt and all the other ingredients in this section. Stir thoroughly to blend. It should feel like a stiff cookie dough.

¼ *cup clarified butter*

Pour the butter into a heavy, medium-sized skillet, coating the bottom. Using a spatula, spread the spicy dough to a thickness of ¼ inch, covering the bottom of the skillet. As it begins to heat, press the pancake with the spatula, and as it begins to bubble, loosen it gently around the edges. When golden brown, turn carefully with two spatulas and brown briefly on other side.

1 *tsp. toasted cumin seed*

Slide onto a heated plate, top with cumin seed, and cut into attractive wedges. Or eat it straight from the skillet. . . .

SERVES 4

Virgin Chicken
(Sufaid Maaz)

As the skies over the plains began to clear and the three-month monsoon faded into a memory, everyone in the Jaipur palace—the cooks, the harem, even the maharaja himself—would begin to watch the moon. At last, in the very ripest days of October, came the long-awaited, fullest, and most beautiful moon of the year. It was time to bring out all the palace baskets, all the vessels and utensils, and set them to be purified in the lovely moonlight. And for the ladies of the harem, it was time to set out a silver bowl of water in which the very moon itself might be captured

and swallowed, so insuring long life to the maharaja. Everything on this most auspicious night, including the food, must be of purest white—the colour of this excellent, festive dish.

Drop the chili seeds into the blender and pulverize them (be careful to protect your eyes). Add all the remaining ingredients in this section, and grind to a smooth purée.

2 *Tbs. seeds only of whole dried red chili peppers*
1½ *Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root*
1 *Tbs. salt*
½ *cup unflavoured yogurt*
¼ *cup heavy whipping cream*

Pour the butter into a medium saucepan. As it begins to warm (not foam) stir in the chicken pieces and the blender mixture. Mix thoroughly. Add one cup of the hot water and simmer uncovered until tender (add extra water as necessary).

¼ *cup clarified butter*
1 *lb. chicken pieces, preferably skinned*
1–2 *cups hot water*

Meanwhile, drop the poppy seed into the blender and pulverize. Add all remaining ingredients in this section. Blend to a smooth purée. Add this purée to the chicken ten minutes before serving. Heat through, stirring gently.

1½ *Tbs. white poppy seed (This is optional; do not substitute black seed.)*
½ *cup dried, unsweetened coconut*
14 *blanched, unsalted almonds*
½ *cup whole milk*

Just before serving, stir in the remaining ingredients.

2 *Tbs. rose-water*
1 *tsp. powdered cardamom*
1 *Tbs. fresh lime juice*
lime wedges

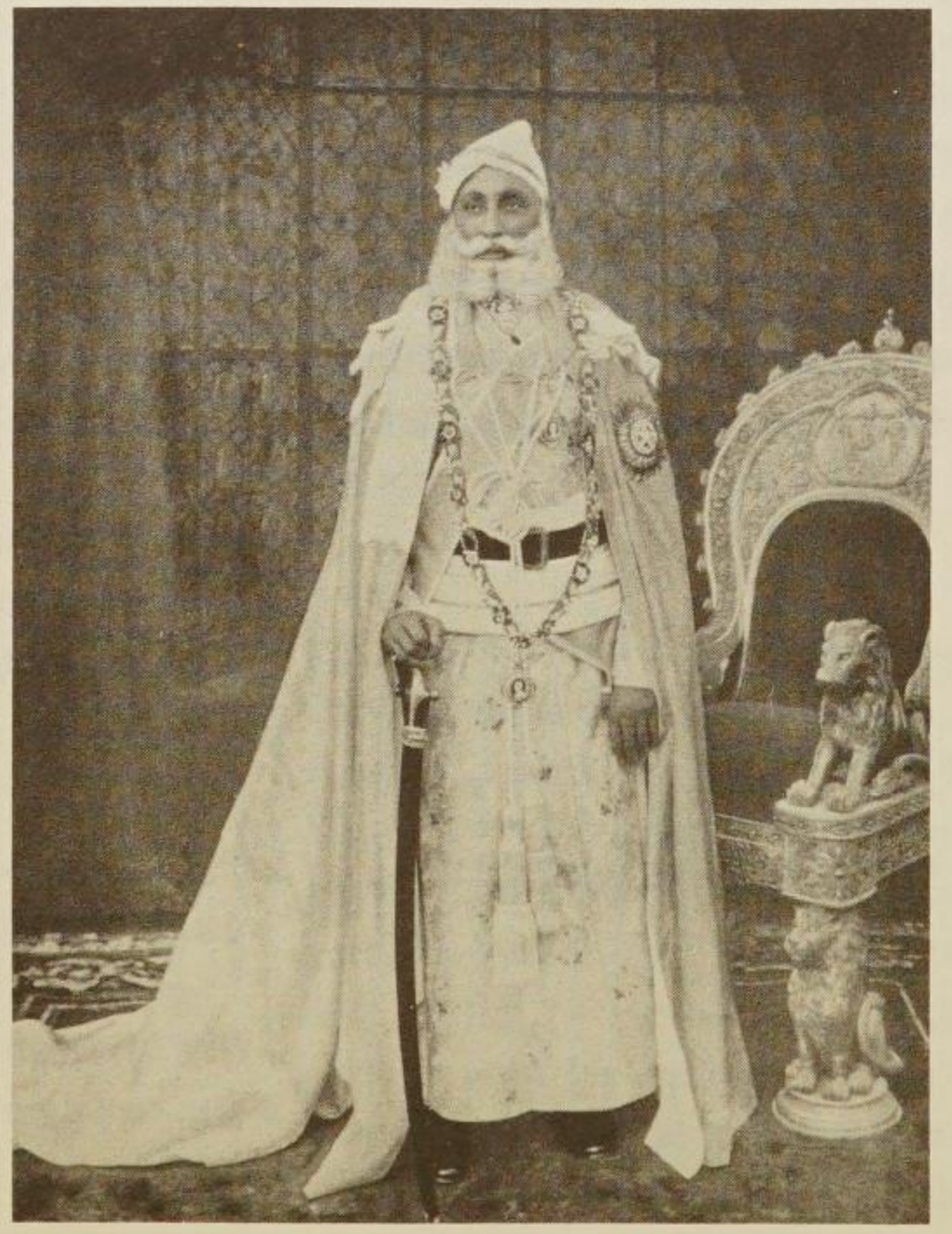
Serve on a mound of moon-white rice to absorb the abundant sauce. Garnish with lime wedges.

SERVES 4

Before feasting on this chicken, all the nobles of the palace paid their respects to the maharaja in the light of the moon:

The white marble terraces of the palace were covered end to end with soft, pure white carpets. Even the walls of the ancient building were sheathed in white draperies. In the whole of the court, there was only one chair. It, too, was upholstered in sumptuous white, its outline gleaming in silver. From that chair, the Maharaja held court in the moonlight. All of the courtiers were dressed in white and all of the jewels were white; skirts were stiff with pearls, coats heavy with diamonds; the moon and the Maharaja blessed the assembly, and the white feast was laid.

—Rosita Forbes



The late Maharaja Fateh Singh of Udaipur.

Four

Jodhpur

Jodhpur lies on the western edge of India, in the midst of a hot, white desert. There is a fort in the kingdom, an imposing affair, commanding Jodhpur's highest hill. In the heart of this fort lies the royal kitchen, awaiting His Highness's whim. But for generations there was rarely a call; the Jodhpur rulers ate in the field. They were warriors in the true sense with very little time for enjoying the pleasures of the palate.

When they did eat, the conditions were sometimes strange—though not by the desert code. Famous is the story of a Jodhpur ruler who, having wounded his foe, rode over to join him for a leisurely lunch—and to inquire of his health. As the enemy in question was also an uncle, they sat down quite cordially. A common platter was shared by the two, and also a betel leaf. After many expressions of mutual esteem, they parted to do battle on the morrow. Details of the meal were never recorded, but it proved to be uncle's last lunch. It was probably goat, with a side dish of chili peppers, rough millet bread, and raw sugar; and yogurt to cool and to strengthen as well—for such was a Jodhpur man's fare.

The frills came much later, as they did throughout India, brought by the northern invader. Real Jodhpur food was filling and simple—the taste of an age without ease.

A hasty judge and curds at noon do harm.
—Proverb of Rajasthan

Yogurt—Tart and Spicy
(Kardi)

Curds at noon could turn the tide of battle—if His Highness indulged in excess. But a hasty judge does harm to himself if he never tries the curds at all. This dish, for example, is dear to the heart of every Jodhpur gentleman; but its merits are hidden to the hasty judge, who thinks it but yogurt gone sour.

5 *cups unflavoured yogurt, very tart*
½ *cup chick-pea flour*

Rub the yogurt through a sieve or squeeze through a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth into a large mixing bowl. Blend thoroughly with the flour and 3 cups water. Set aside.

¼ *cup clarified butter*
4–6 *fresh, green chili peppers, seeded and julienned*
6 *inches of cinnamon stick*
8 *cloves*
1 *tsp. cumin seed*
½ *tsp. mustard seed, black or yellow*

In a heavy, medium-sized saucepan, heat the butter almost to smoking. Keep the lid close by. Drop in all remaining ingredients in this section. Cover immediately. Shake over high heat for 2 minutes.

2 *tsp. salt*
1 *tsp. minced garlic*
2 *tsp. scraped and grated ginger root*

Uncover pan and add all ingredients in this section. Stir in the yogurt mixture. (Beware of steam.) Cook uncovered over medium heat. Stir constantly until liquid comes to a boil once. Reduce heat, cover, and reduce liquid by one-third. It should be the consistency of a cream soup when ready.

Strain and serve in small, individual bowls as a first course, or serve over rice with the main course. The longer it sits before serving, the better it is; but it should be served very hot.

(For an interesting variation, place a charcoal briquette on the burner. Leave until it burns strongly. Make a small cup of aluminum foil and float it on the soup. Using tongs, transfer the burning coal into this cup. Keep the pot lid close by. Put 2 drops of melted butter on the coal. Close the lid immediately. Allow to smoke without opening for as long as possible.)

SERVES 4–6 IN SMALL PORTIONS

If I eat, it shall be wheat, else I shall remain as I am.

—Proverb of Jodhpur

Wheat with Meat

(Soweeta)

It has been rumoured that jodhpur pants were designed in Jodhpur for no other purpose than to store wheat, conveniently, while riding across the desert. The truth of the rumour shall never be known, but there is no doubt that the people like grain. They eat it as a bread, as a sweet, and as a savory; and here they ally it with meat. The marriage is quite successful; eaten with tart yogurt, it makes a complete, filling meal, Jodhpur's favourite by far.

Set the chilis to soaking in a cup of hot water.

3–6 *whole dried red chili peppers about 4 inches long, seeded*

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Drop all ingredients in this section into the blender with 6 Tbs. water. Reduce to fine paste. Remove from blender and set aside on a plate by the stove.

½ *cup scraped and minced ginger root*
¼ *cup powdered coriander*
2 *tsp. salt*

In medium-sized, oven-proof casserole, heat the butter and fry ½ cup of the onions until just crisp. Add meat pieces. Stir and immediately add reserved blender mixture. Fry, turning with a spatula, for 5 minutes over medium heat. Add 2 cups water and boil gently, uncovered, until liquid is nearly absorbed.

¼ *cup clarified butter*
3½ *cups onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices*
1½ *lbs. lean, boneless lamb (preferably leg or shoulder), cut into 2-inch cubes*

Add yogurt and the remaining onions. Stir and continue to boil gently, uncovered, until the yogurt is completely absorbed.

1 *cup unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with a fork*

While the meat is cooking, bring 3 cups salted water to boil in a medium saucepan. Wash wheat and boil un-

2 *tsp. salt*
2 *cups whole wheat grains*

3 cups whole milk, heated

covered until the water is all absorbed. Set aside off heat until meat has absorbed the yogurt. Then stir wheat into the meat casserole. Pour hot milk down the sides of the casserole and bring it to a boil. Cover tightly with foil, crimping edges to seal. Place lid on top and put in preheated oven. Bake 30 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. It will hold in the oven when ready.

½–1 tsp. salt
¼ cup clarified butter

Drain the reserved red chili peppers. Mix with salt to taste. Sauté gently in butter for 5 minutes. Pass separately as a sauce for the meat for those who like a very hot dish.

SERVES 4

Serve with a light vegetable or salad.

Salt

One day Raja Chowan, the founder of the Jodhpur dynasty, came upon an ascetic while riding through the desert. The holy man, in deep meditation, did not notice when the Raja picked up his beautiful golden amulet, the most beautiful amulet on earth. The Raja was tempted to keep it for himself. The holy man would never know and surely it was an amulet worthy of a king. Only reluctantly did Raja Chowan replace the jewel at the feet of the ascetic; but no sooner had he loosed his hold upon it than a beautiful goddess appeared, granting him any boon he might wish as a reward for his honesty. "Mount your horse," she said, "and ride until you can ride no further. But do not look back. In the end your boon will be granted."

Filled with wonder, Raja Chowan mounted his impatient steed and began to ride towards the horizon. When he had ridden very, very far, his long turban blew in the wind and became entangled in a thorn bush. Forgetting his vow to the goddess, Raja Chowan turned to loose himself. Instantly the plain all about him was covered in silver. The people of the Raja's kingdom were speechless and could not believe their eyes. But soon they began to

beg the goddess to remove this silver from their land, knowing that so much wealth could only bring envy and dissension to their peaceful kingdom.

The lake of silver was therefore transformed into a lake of salt, which has ever after provided work and food for the people of the kingdoms of Jodhpur and Jaipur.

—Legend of Rajasthan

To this day descendants of the very same families who witnessed this lake of silver still tend the lake of salt: the nessed this lake of silver still tend the lake of salt: the Banjaras, traditional carriers of salt, and the Kharwals, collectors and miners. Every year their lake yields more than two hundred thousand tons of silver-white salt and the grateful inhabitants have built a temple to the goddess who gave them their treasure-filled lake.

Salt has meant life to these people in so many ways that throughout the kingdom it is called *subrasa*—the essence of everything. People say that salt, like nothing else they know, is auspicious and brings good luck, for it mixes pleasantly with everything. The first purchase of the New Year must be salt, to bring good luck to the house. But one must never pass salt to another for fear of spilling it; salt spilled between two friends brings enmity and quarrels. On the other hand, two who want to renew a broken friendship must seal their reunion by eating salt together.

To the people of Rajasthan salt is salary—*salarium*—exactly as it was to the Roman soldiers, who were partially paid in salt. To vegetarians, salt is life itself. It makes them thirsty, makes them perspire, and helps them digest by breaking down the starches they eat into sugar. Of all the minerals that are eaten, only salt can be detected by sensors in the tongue and mouth—as though the goddess who provided the salt wanted to insure that her people would partake of it, to preserve both their food and their health.

Where there is salt there is life.
—Proverb of Rajasthan

Chili Bird and Salt
(Shikari Murgi)

So popular was salt among the Mughals that certain of their old cookbooks record methods for cooking salt alone as a vegetable. The process called for large chunks of rock salt to be soaked for up to a week in water (thus eliminating the saltiness) and then to be simmered gently in vegetable stock, so that the rock salt became tender and savoury.

For every 1 *lb. of fowl:*
1 *fresh lime or lemon*
¼–½ *cup clarified butter or vegetable oil*
3–6 *whole dried red chili peppers, seeded (each at least 3 inches long)*
1 *Tbs. salt*
1 *cup hot water*

Do not wash the fowl. Rub it inside and out with a cut lime. Quarter any bird larger than a partridge: leave small birds whole. Put chilis, salt, and butter in a saucepan. Bring slowly to medium heat. Put in the fowl and sauté gently until its natural liquid has evaporated. Do not try to brown it. The butter should never go beyond a gentle bubbling. Continue to sauté, turning the bird as necessary. Add ¼ cup of the water and simmer until the water has evaporated.

Repeat this three times until water is used up and the fowl is tender.

wedges of fresh lime (optional)

Eat with rice or bread to absorb the spicy oil. Serve with wedges of lime to counteract the chilis if desired.

Between-the-Battles Baked Vegetable

(Bangan ka Bhurtha)

One day the King was enjoying a dish of eggplant and extolling its excellence, when his servant chimed in and said it was indeed most excellent. The next day, however, the eggplant (and the outcome of the day's battle) having disagreed with him, the King began to abuse it as a very unwholesome vegetable . . . and his servant then observed that it was very unwholesome, truly. "Why," said the King, "did you praise it before?"

"I am your servant," he replied, "not the eggplant's."

—Tale of Rajasthan

If you too have been ambivalent about eating eggplant, try this dish as a first course or salad. In India it would be eaten with hot wheaten bread (or with jewelled fingers dipped in discreetly). On the battlefield hot coals would be used in place of an oven, adding a smoky flavour to the dish.

Preheat oven to 450° F.

Rub the eggplants lightly with oil. Bake in preheated oven until completely tender, almost mushy (45 minutes–1 hour). Alternatively, bake directly in very hot coals to give an excellent smoky flavour to the dish. Cool. Peel and put the flesh in a large mixing bowl. Mash completely with a fork. Discard any tough, stringy fibres.

2 small eggplants, 1 lb. each (see note)
vegetable oil

Using a fork, beat all ingredients in this section into the eggplant. For a smoother, lighter blend, grind in the blender. Taste for salt.

¼ cup unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with fork
1–3 tsp. ground hot red chili pepper (to taste)
1½ tsp. powdered cumin
¼–½ tsp. salt (to taste)
1 tsp. fresh lime juice

Select any two or three of the optional additions and add

Optional additions:
2½ Tbs. minced onion

2 *Tbs. minced fresh coriander leaf, or* 2 *Tbs. minced parsley*
1 *tsp. seeded and minced fresh, green chili pepper*
2 *tsp. scraped and minced ginger root*
2 *tsp. cumin seed, mint (do not substitute dried)*
2 *tsp. cumin seed, toasted in an ungreased skillet*
¼ *cup fresh pomegranate seeds*
smoke (see technique, page 114)
SERVES 4–6

to taste. Serve at room temperature as a salad, or hot as a hearty first course. It will keep up to three days in the refrigerator. Drain off any excess liquid collected in bottom of bowl before serving.

Note: Though eggplant is the standard base for this dish, try tomato, potatoes—or even pumpkin—baked and seasoned in the same manner.

Desert people are very fond of cauliflower, which grows easily and keeps very well. Their passion is shared by all India, as seen in the well-known tale:

Fried Vegetables, Fit for a King
(Subzi Tali Hui)

A Puranic, or one who publicly reads the holy books, was giving a reading in which was included a verse forbidding the eating of cauliflower in that particular month. His wife happened to be there and heard the command read; so on her way home she did not buy this particular vegetable, although she knew her husband was passionately fond of it. As she served the dinner, she explained this to her husband, who, on hearing it, exclaimed, "The cauliflowers of the holy book are to stay in the holy book!"

—Tale of Central India

This particular cauliflower is good all year round. It is crisp and has no tell-tale odor. Okra or potatoes substitute well.

Divide the cauliflower into small flowerets, discarding any thick stems, or chop okra or potatoes into ½-inch cubes. Be sure all pieces are thoroughly dry before frying.

1 *large, firm cauliflower*
or
1 *lb. okra*
or
1 *lb. potatoes, peeled*
vegetable oil for frying

Pour oil to a depth of 3 inches into a small, heavy saucepan. Heat until a haze forms over the top. Carefully slide in the vegetable pieces. They should not crowd one another. If all the pieces cannot move freely in one pan, fry them in two lots. Adjust heat so that vegetables fry without scorching and continue cooking uncovered until they are russet brown and crisp.

If the vegetables are to be prepared ahead of time, remove them from the oil before they are crisp. (Potatoes and cauliflower should be just tender.) Five minutes before serving, plunge into very hot oil and crisp.

Remove with slotted spoon and drain. Toss in a mixture of all spices in this section and serve immediately.

2 *tsp. salt*
1 *tsp. cumin powder*
¼–½ *tsp. ground hot red chili pepper (to taste)*
½ *tsp. coarsely ground black pepper*

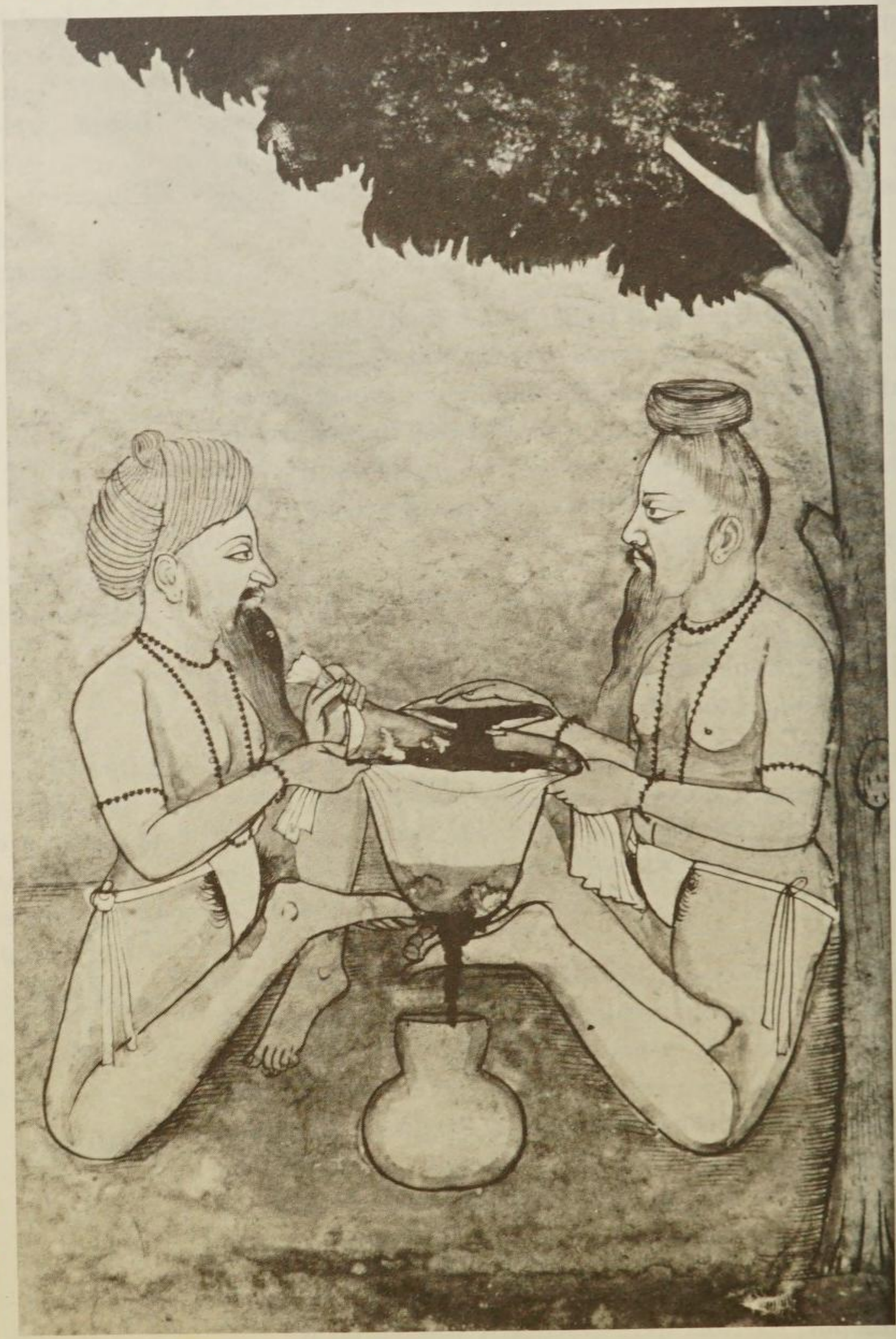
SERVES 4–6

Opium

Opium is nothing else than the milk of poppies. . . .

—*Hobson's Jobson,* a dictionary

Milk, then, the milk of the poppy, was very popular in Rajasthan. According to Colonel Tod, the British Agent in Udaipur, warriors were practically weaned on it:



The men of Jodhpur all conduct themselves in one manner. They all eat opium, and on the day of battle they swallow a double dose. They also give some to their horses to enable them to endure fatigue. They dress in yellow, dyeing their clothes that colour with saffron. Many of them wear gold armlets, so that, if killed, those finding the body may see to its cremation. When they draw near to the enemy, their musicians begin to sing songs in a loud voice, with a violin accompaniment, in praise of their courage. These musicians are also on horseback and well armed, all drunk with opium, their eyes flaming and red. In place of saying that they will sally forth to battle, they say, "Me mariche"—that is, "We mean to die." Then grasping their lances firmly, they throw themselves on the enemy like madmen. If by mischance, the spear is broken, they draw the kattar or dagger and blindly cut and stab at all they meet, and never retreat, so that they either conquer or lose their lives. . . .

Rajasthanis, like other Indians throughout history, believed in the manifold blessings of opium. It was a cure for disease, a restorative after labour, something to break the monotony of life and to quell appetite in a famine. It was also aphrodisiac.

In ancient India opium was called *Indrasana,* the god Indra's food. It was thought that Lord Shiva brought the poppy to his followers from the heights of the Himalayas. Worshippers pounded it in a huge mortar with a pestle and offered it with *soma,* sacred grass, and barley, in the sacrificial fire. Scholars and healers found in it marvelous properties: "acridity, astringency, heat, pungency, removing wind and phlegm, speech and strength-giving, inspiring of mental power, property of a most excellent excitant."

Clearly the eating of opium involved no social stigma. Wandering ascetics, revered by the populace, were seen openly distilling their daily doses. They, however, were blissfully unmarried, with no wife to note their "red,

Hindu ascetics preparing milk of poppies.

flaming eyes." Despite the assurances of various (male) scholars concerning opium as aphrodisiac, village women to this day sing a lament about their poppy-milk-drinking mates:

A ganja-*drinker's wife is happy.*
The opium-eater's wife lives like a widow.
The liquor drinker's wife cries, "My bull
comes snorting home."

In response, the red-eyed husband has a song of his own —perhaps the final statement on opium:

If my opium pipe have I,
what care I if I live or die.
Let me smoke and let me sleep,
let others sow, if I but reap.

Five

Bikaner

In the far, far reaches of Western India—as remote as Jodhpur, though farther north—lies the moon kingdom of Bikaner, a kingdom with sand-dune horizons. Her rulers are appropriately called—in the language of their people—"Lords of the Desert." The desert they control on horse and camel yields them little in the way of food: bark from the hardy Khejra tree is eaten as a vegetable, as are the roots and seeds of desert grasses; even locusts, fresh or preserved, are food in a kingdom with scant water. The one cultivated crop, *bajra* or millet, is a staple food for the poor; only kings can buy barley and wheat. Milk is mercifully plentiful, but eggs are a luxury, so the ever-resourceful Lords of the Desert have devised a way to preserve what few there are. An egg in Bikaner can be a full meal, tucked away in a camel bag and eaten when the palate longs for change. Camel's Humph Kababs they are fondly called, in memory of a Kipling fable.

On the first day of creation—according to Kipling—only the camel, among all the newly created beasts, refused to do his share of work. For three days, he isolated himself in the Howling Desert and answered everyone who besought him to work with a most contemptuous "humph!"

On the fourth day, the Overseer lost patience at last and raised upon the proud camel's back a great "lolloping humph," so that thenceforth he would be able to work for three days straight without stopping to eat.

Today people who live in Bikaner's Howling Desert love these excellent egg kababs, secretly noting their resemblance to friend camel's historical humph.

Camel's Humph Kababs

(Ande ka Kabab)

Combine all ingredients in this section in a small saucepan. Cover and reduce to 1 cup liquid over low heat. Strain. Reserve broth.

2 cups lamb broth (or beef bouillon)
2 Tbs. chopped onion
2 Tbs. powdered coriander
2 tsp. salt

½ *cup minced onion*
2 *Tbs. clarified butter or vegetable oil*
1 *Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root*
½ *tsp. powdered cinnamon*
¼ *tsp. powdered white pepper*
1½ *tsp. salt*

Meanwhile, heat the butter in a small skillet and fry onions until brown and crisp. Pour onions and butter into blender jar. Add all remaining ingredients in this section. Blend to a fine paste. Set aside.

6 *large eggs*

With a sharp-pointed knife, carefully chip a half-inch hole in the slender end of each egg. Empty their contents into the blender jar.

Set the eggshells, open end up, in a heat-resistant bowl just large enough to hold them firmly without slipping. Turn on blender and blend contents just long enough to mix. Pour immediately into eggshells, filling each half-full. (Drippings are not disastrous.) Place egg bowl in small pot, one-quarter full of water. Cover pot and steam eggs for 15 minutes or until the contents are firm. Rinse under cold water. Cool and peel immediately.

10 *almonds, blanched and unsalted*
4 *tsp. cornstarch*
2 *Tbs. unflavoured yogurt*

Meanwhile, toss the almonds in a small, ungreased skillet until they are half-toasted. Add the cornstarch and continue tossing until both are golden. Pour both into clean blender jar. Add yogurt and prepared broth. Blend thoroughly and pour into small, oven-proof casserole.

Preheat oven to 300° F.

½ *cup clarified butter*
2 *cloves*

In a small skillet, heat the butter to crackling. Keep a lid close by. Drop in the cloves and cover immediately. Remove from heat and leave covered for 5 minutes. Strain butter into casserole of sauce. Discard cloves. Fold peeled eggs into sauce and bake in preheated oven for 20 minutes, basting occasionally. Serve very hot with plain white rice.

SERVES 2 AS ENTREE:
4 AS SIDE DISH

The young Maharaja of Udaipur proceeding to meet his bride in Bikaner.

Desert Spare Ribs

(Bhanslas)

The desert bards of Bikaner still tell the story of the prince who was captured indirectly by a wild boar. It seems the good nobleman, out pig-hunting with his entourage, encountered a woman of the fields. This woman killed a wild boar before their very eyes by impaling it upon a stalk of corn. The prince's first inclination was to give credit to a stout stalk of corn for this marvellous feat. But he was soon persuaded of the damsel's own prowess; for she proceeded to disable the prince's horse with her slingshot and throw his companion to the ground with her own delicate hands. In the end, of course, she married the prince and they dined regularly on the following pork dish:

4 *cups unflavoured yogurt*
1/2 *cup dried apricots*

At least 3 hours before cooking, pour the yogurt into a large strainer lined with a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth and leave to drip over a bowl. (About 1 1/2 cups waterless yogurt will be required.) Put the apricots in a cup of water to soak.

1/3 *cup clarified butter or vegetable oil*
1/2 *cup coarsely and evenly chopped onion*
2 *tsp. minced garlic*
1 *Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root*
1 *tsp. ground hot red pepper*
1/2 *tsp. turmeric*
1 *tsp. salt*

Two hours before serving, preheat oven to broil. In a very small saucepan, heat the butter and fry onions until brown and crisp. Pour onions and oil into the blender. Add all remaining ingredients in this section and grind to a fine paste. Drain the apricots. Add them to this paste and blend again to a fine paste. Stir in the waterless yogurt and mix thoroughly with a spoon but do not grind in blender. Reserve.

2 *lbs. country-style spare ribs, cut to be eaten by hand*
4 *cloves*
1/2 *tsp. clarified butter*

Place the meat in a large pot that can be tightly lidded. Pour the blender mixture over it and knead until the meat is thoroughly coated. Place a charcoal briquette on a burner turned high and leave till it is burning strongly. Make a cup of aluminium foil and place it in the center of the meat. Using tongs, transfer the burning coal into this cup. Keep the lid of the pot close by. Place the cloves on top of the burning coal. When they begin to smoulder, drop the butter directly on them. Immediately close the lid. Leave to smoke for a few minutes without opening the pot.

1/4 *cup chopped fresh coriander leaf (cilantro), or 1/4 cup chopped parsley*

One hour and a half before serving, place the meat on a rack in a roasting pan and leave 5 inches under broiler until brown and crisp on both sides (approximately 20 minutes). Turn only once. Reduce heat to 350°. Test meat for doneness and bake until tender (45 minutes–1 hour). Garnish with chopped fresh coriander leaf or parsley.

SERVES 4

Feast-Day Meat
(Dilshad Korma)

On a real feast day this dish would be but one of at least thirty others—everything from condiment to sweet. The greater the number of meat dishes, the finer the meal; so there would be kababs and pullaos as well as plain meat, such as this. Plain means rather light and with very little sauce, not unseasoned by any means but a balance for the richer dishes. The spices are removed before it is served, unlike many heavy dishes on the table.

One by one drop all ingredients in this section into the blender. Pulverize each before adding the next. The result should be a smooth purée. Set aside.

- *½ cup unflavoured yogurt*
- *1 small onion, minced*
- *5 garlic cloves*
- *4 tsp. scraped and minced ginger root*
- *2–4 tsp. ground hot red chili pepper (to taste)*
- *3½ tsp. powdered coriander*

Place all the spices in this section in the middle of a large square of cheesecloth. Pour the blender mixture over them. Tie everything securely in the cloth. It does not matter if a bit seeps through. Place this bag and the meat in a medium-sized saucepan. Cover with 3 cups water. Cover pan and cook over medium heat until the meat is half tender (15–20 minutes). Skim as necessary.

- *4 inches of cinnamon stick*
- *1 bay leaf*
- *6 cloves*
- *4 cardamom pods, or ¼ tsp. powdered cardamom*
- *1 Tbs. cumin seed*
- *1 lb. lean, boneless lamb, cut into 3-inch cubes*

Meanwhile, in a small skillet, heat the butter and fry onions until brown and quite crisp. Remove with a slotted spoon, pressing out the butter. Drain and crush fine between sheets of paper towelling. Reserve butter.

- *½ cup onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices*
- *⅓ cup clarified butter*

When meat is half tender, and its sauce is reduced by half, remove the spice bag to a plate. Cool, and wring

- *2 tsp. salt*

its juices into the meat pot. Discard contents of bag. Add crushed onions, reserved butter, and salt to the meat. Cook it uncovered over low heat until meat is thoroughly tender and glazed to a deep russet. Turn constantly with a spatula and adjust heat to prevent burning as the liquid evaporates.

Serve hot on a bed of steaming white rice. Garnish if desired. Freezes well.

2 *tsp. seeded and minced fresh, green chili peppers (optional)*
½ *Tbs. minced fresh coriander leaf (cilantro) (optional)*

SERVES 3–4

A Wheat Sweet
(Lapsi)

Rajasthan has always been more accustomed to fasting than to feasting, but on the occasion of a marriage, every effort is made to provide the richest possible from that which is available. *Lapsi* has long been the most frequently served sweet at Rajasthani weddings, because both the wheat and sugar are obtainable there.

Preheat oven to 300° F.

⅔ *cup clarified butter*
1 *lb. coarsely cracked wheat (about 2¼ cups)*
5 *cups boiling water or milk (according to richness desired)*

In a large, oven-proof casserole that can be tightly lidded, heat the clarified butter. Stir in the cracked wheat with a spatula. Continue stirring and turning over medium heat until the wheat is toasty brown and sounds like pebbles when dropped into the pot. Pour the boiling water or milk over it. Stir well. Cover and cook over medium heat until almost all the liquid is absorbed.

⅛ *tsp. saffron threads*
¾–1 *cup sugar (to taste)*
½ *cup seedless raisins*
2¼ *cups whole milk, hot*
⅓ *cup clarified butter, melted*

Meanwhile, crumble the saffron threads into a cup and pour over them ¼ cup of hot water or milk. Leave to soak. When the wheat is ready, stir in the saffron with its soaking-liquid. Set aside half the quantity of nuts for garnish. Add remaining nuts, raisins, sugar, 2 cups milk, and butter and mix well. Bring liquid in casserole to boil, stirring

constantly. Cover tightly and transfer to preheated oven. Bake until all liquid is absorbed (about 25 minutes). Garnish with reserved nuts and serve in heated individual bowls.

½ cup blanched and slivered unsalted almonds
½ cup blanched and slivered pistachios

SERVES 6–8

Sweets and weddings are almost synonymous in India. Among members of the Brahmin caste, weddings are so auspicious that the Brahmin priests themselves are responsible for preparing the wedding sweets. Possibly because more of the sugar in India comes from the intensely sweet sugar cane than from sugar beet, the Indian capacity for sweets is much more highly developed than in the West. Almost all the sweets prepared for weddings will be very sugary, though each with a different flavour. Few, however, will be made with milk; for milk sours quickly and weddings are notoriously slow.

In orthodox families, the wedding may be the only occasion in the new couple's life when the husband partakes of a meal with his wife. The incantations at this ceremony are accordingly solemn.

"Take away whatever vices there may be in my wife," says the groom, dropping a bit of food into the sacrificial wedding fire. He then turns and offers his bride a morsel of food with his own hand, saying:

I give you this morsel and unite my life with yours.
I unite my skin with your skin.
I unite my flesh with your flesh.

The bride is then officially considered to be half of her husband's body. She in turn offers him a morsel of food with her small hand to confirm the fact of their union. And they live happily ever after. . . .

If they happen to be a couple from Rajasthan or North

India, the morsel of food that united them may well have been a bit of *lapsi;* and—because they are primarily wheat-eaters—the proverb which sings through their daily lives may well be the one which follows:

Of grains, wheat is the greatest.
Of wealth, the best is the milk-giving cow.
Of cloth, the chief is the black blanket
that never goes to the washerman's house.

My husband is neither from North India nor particularly orthodox, but we too had *lapsi* at our wedding. Being new-fashioned Hindus, we always eat together now—unlike many a husband and wife. But I do not feed him "with my small hand" as I did during the ceremonies. My hand unfortunately was the cause of some concern during the first of those ceremonies. One week before the wedding, all my husband's female relatives arrived to present me with glass bangles. These beautiful bangles are very important to orthodox Hindu women. Only when their husbands die do they break and remove them, with great weeping and lamentation. All my husband's relatives clustered about me to observe the presentation of the bangles. "My small American hand," however, broke the first one. And the second. And the third. Inauspicious, to say the least. Without a word, the ladies retired to have larger ones specially made.

Six

Kishengarh

Of all the kingdoms in Rajasthan, Kishengarh is the baby brother—not ten or twenty thousand square miles, like Jodhpur or Jaipur, but eight hundred and fifty-eight. They have changed very little, these few hundred square miles, in the three centuries since they became a kingdom: modest hills, a bit of forest, scrub brush, and open spaces. Brother princes from the south would approach the kingdom through poppies—vast fields of them—the opium beds of Malwa. Those from the North would come through neighbouring kingdoms, passing through Mughal Delhi.

A fort and a palace, with a lake between them; there is little to suggest good cuisine here. But duck, in their migrations, once covered the lake, as black buck and wild boar covered the plains. What she wanted in size, Kishengarh made up in skill; her cooks turned these resources into marvels, in many ways they rivalled the Kishengarh painters, famous for their exquisite miniatures. In these paintings, almond-eyed beauties dally with their lovers and handmaidens. Their days are spent on pleasure boats or resting in gardens, sampling endless wines and savoury sweetmeats. No doubt this little snack, delicate brain in spices, was often served as sunset stained the lake.

Brains

(Bheje ka Bhujia)

½ *lb. lamb (or calf) brains*

Steam or simmer brains in a small quantity of water for 15 minutes. Remove and gently peel off the transparent membrane. Chop and mash the brains slightly into a large mixing bowl.

1½ *cup chick-pea flour*
4 *tsp. salt*
1 *tsp. ground hot red chili pepper*
1 *cup minced fresh coriander leaf (cilantro),*

Meanwhile, stir the flour in an ungreased skillet until it is khaki colour and fragrant. Pour into the mixing bowl with the brains. Add all the remaining ingredients and mix thoroughly but lightly with two forks. Divide this mixture into 24 balls of equal size. These can be held for up to a day in the refrigerator, covered with a damp cloth.

or 1 cup minced parsley
1/4 cup seeded and minced fresh, green chili peppers
1 1/2 cups green onion, chopped fine (include some tops)

Twenty minutes before serving, preheat oven to warm and line a tray with paper towels. Heat oil over medium heat and fry the balls 6 at a time until just golden. Remove with slotted spoon and keep warm in oven. Serve as soon as possible.

vegetable oil for frying, approximately 2 cups or enough to cover 3 inches in wok or fryer

SERVES 2

Kishengarh Kitchera

This simple dish of rice and lentils has become a sort of Indian institution. Beloved of everyone—even of horses, who were given it to strengthen them for fighting—*kitchera* can be plain, a dish for any peasant, or fancy for the king and queen. At every birthday feast of a Mughal Emperor, there was "kitchera" of silver and gold coin. Strewn in the hands of noble attendants, it bore scant resemblance to the real things.

Jehangir, one of the Mughal emperors, had a preference for that real thing. So much so that he made the following note:

> Of the food which is particular to the people of western India, there is the *kitchera* of *bajra,* a mixture of split peas and millet boiled together. It is a kind of split grain which does not grow in any other country but Hindustan. It is cheaper than most vegetables. As I had never eaten it, I ordered them to make some and bring it to me. It is not devoid of flavour, and it suited me well. I ordered that on days of abstinence, when I partake of dishes not made with flesh, they should frequently bring me this *kitchera*. . . .
>
> —Jehangir's Memoirs

¾ cup white, long-grain rice (not precooked)
¾ cup moong dal
salt

Two hours before cooking, mix the rice and beans and wash under cold running water until the water runs clear. Cover with fresh, lightly salted water and leave to soak for 2 hours.

Note: Moong dal is a kind of lentil or bean that can be obtained from shops specializing in Indian products. It is not to be confused with the dried green mung beans that are used for sprouting. If moong dal cannot be found, you may substitute the lentils commonly found in American supermarkets, but the dish will not be authentic, since American lentils are from a different plant.

Preheat oven to 300° F.

½ cup clarified butter
1 cup onion, cut in half from top to root and across the grain into thin, even slices

In a medium-sized, oven-proof casserole, heat the butter and fry onions until crisp and golden brown. Remove with slotted spoon. Drain and set aside. Reserve butter in casserole.

3 tsp. salt
pinch powdered cloves
¼ tsp. powdered cardamom
1 tsp. powdered cumin

Drain rice and beans thoroughly and mix them with all the ingredients in this section. Turn into the remaining butter and fry, stirring constantly, for 10 minutes. The butter should be completely absorbed and the grains a light, golden brown. Add 1½ cups hot water and boil uncovered until this is completely absorbed. Stir with a fork if necessary.

1 cup milk
½ cup whipping cream

Meanwhile heat milk and cream together. Add to the *kitchera* when the water is absorbed and bring to a boil. Cover and place in preheated oven for 20 minutes or until liquid is completely absorbed.

butter

Top with butter before serving. Can be held up to 2 hours in a 250° oven.

SERVES 6

Serve with a light vegetable and grilled meat.

Fowl in Five Hundred Bats of an Eye

(Panch Minute ka Titar)

The Maharaja of Kishengarh used to prepare this dish with his own hand; he would also shoot the birds. What he did not do was time the cooking. This was done by an age-old retainer, using an age-old system. A day in India is divided in sixty parts, not twenty-four as in the West. These sixty parts are finally broken down into tiny units called *pals*. The duration of a *pal* is sixty full eye blinks, making two hundred and sixteen thousand blinks in a day!

About five hundred blinks is enough for this dish—or five minutes, if you prefer. When His Highness presided, the time was measured on a water clock—a cup with a tiny aperture which floated in a bowl of water. This cup filled in exactly five minutes and sank to the bottom of the bowl. In that time the bird will be thoroughly hot and crisp—as the oil is heated to boiling—but more tender than the tenderest slow-cooked bird because the muscles never have time to stiffen.

1 *fresh lime or lemon*
any dressed fowl
salt

Do not wash the fowl. Dry thoroughly with towel to avoid oil spatter during cooking. Rub it inside and out with cut lime. If the fowl is no larger than a partridge, leave it whole. Stuff it loosely with salt and truss securely. Larger birds should be cut into serving pieces.

pure vegetable oil for frying

Half fill a deep fryer or medium-sized, high-sided pot with oil. Heat over a high burner for 10 minutes or until oil just begins to smoke. Using tongs, slide in as much fowl as the pot will accommodate without overflowing. Immediately cover pot with inverted strainer to prevent spattering. Deep fry for exactly 5 minutes (for larger birds), 3 minutes for snipe, quail, dove, and other small birds.

Remove. Drain and sprinkle with salt. The skin should be crisp and golden, the meat meltingly tender.

Clouds of Curds
(Dahi ka Kabab)

In this recipe, the tiny grains of the chick-pea must be tenderly roasted and ground before they are mixed with the yogurt and served with a sauce of saffron. Formerly the sauce was made of purest sunset sky; but the recipe had to be altered when the sky went so far away from the earth:

It happened a long, long time ago. A woman was pounding grain with a pestle. At that time the sky was very low and as she went on pounding the grain, her pestle suddenly hit the sky. "How low this sky is," she grumbled. "You can't even pound properly here." The sky heard her words. It was so angry with her that it mounted upwards and has since remained far, far above us.

—Tale of Rajasthan

The traditional method of churning buttermilk.

At least 4 hours before cooking, pour the yogurt into a large strainer lined with a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth and set over a bowl to drip. (Two cups of yogurt will be required, so thick that a finger poked in it will leave an impression.)

4 cups thick, unflavoured yogurt, preferably homemade

When yogurt is ready, crumble saffron threads into a tiny bowl. Pour the water over them and leave to soak.

pinch saffron threads
2 Tbs. boiling water

In a heavy, ungreased skillet, stir the chick-peas over a medium fire until they are toast brown and fragrant. Pulverize them in the blender, shaking and scraping as necessary. Sift into a large mixing bowl. Remove half the sifted flour to a plate. Into the remaining half, stir the thick yogurt and half the saffron water. Set aside.

⅔ cup dried chick-peas

Purée all ingredients in this section in a blender with ¼ cup water. Remove 2 tsp. of this purée into the yogurt-and-flour mixture. Blend thoroughly with a spoon. Add milk and second half of saffron water to purée remaining in blender. Blend thoroughly and reserve in blender.

pinch of powdered cloves
pinch of black pepper
pinch of powdered cinnamon
2 tsp. salt
½ tsp. ground hot red chili pepper
5 garlic buds, peeled
2 Tbs. milk

Make flat, round patties of the yogurt-and-flour mixture (about one inch in diameter). Dust each one with flour reserved in the plate. (They can now be held for several hours before frying.)

about ½ cup clarified butter or vegetable oil

Thirty minutes before serving, pour butter to a depth of ½ inch in a small skillet. Sauté the patties a few at a time until they are just golden. Turn only once very carefully. Control heat so that they sauté gently. Remove to a shallow bowl as they are ready. Just before serving, heat the sauce reserved in the blender and pour it over the patties.

Serve hot, as a light entree or as a side dish with meat, rice, and a green vegetable.

SERVES 3–4 AS AN ENTREE, 6 AS A SIDE DISH

Seven

Palanpur

Ancestors of the present Newabs of Palanpur were of Afghan blood. They came to India in the twelfth century when the tides of unending dynastical warfare left them masters of a small domain. Surrounded on all sides by Hindu Rajputs, they maintained a two-thousand-square-mile state that ranks with Bhopal as one of the most important Muslim states in the northern half of India. Though Palanpur lies technically in Rajasthan, its heart and its kitchens are almost pure Mughal, as are many of the Muslim kitchens. What does this mean? An old cookbook from Palanpur quaintly sums up the difference: "Mohameddans [Muslims], being voluptuous, add such strength-giving articles as almond marrow, cream, and the petals of roses. That is the only difference."

It makes, however, quite an interesting difference—especially in Palanpur, where the food is not only "strength-giving" but also quite refined. Their specialties are kababs and pullaos, both of which are served with elaborate ceremony, in the finest Mughal traditions. The ceremony begins at the very beginning, with the preparation of ingredients for the meal. Out of deference to their Hindu compatriots, Muslims in India generally do not eat beef; and in accordance with their own religion, they do not eat pork. Sheep, goats, and chickens, however, are prepared in infinite variety—after they have been "halaled." A Muslim will not eat meat unless it has been killed according to custom and carefully bled from the throat. This bleeding, called *halal,* was prescribed by the Prophet as a precaution against eating rotten meat.

Accompanying the assortment of meat dishes, which usually far outnumber vegetables, are various breads particular to Muslim cuisine, among them *rumali roti,* or handkerchief bread. One or two cooks are detailed from the kitchen crew specifically to make this bread. The stretching of the dough is in itself an art that takes hours of practice to learn. These cooks work quickly over blazing fires to

heat the tissue-thin *roti* and rush it to the banquet hall. Their work never ceases until dinner is over, the last jewelled hand has been washed, and the party has retired to smoke their hookas and listen to soft music—all a part of the ritual in the palaces of Palanpur.

Spinach and Roses
(Palak Pullao)

A typical example of the "voluptuous" cuisine of Palanpur is this exquisite blend of cream, rice, spinach, and, yes, delicate, fresh, red rose petals. The technique of frying and reducing cream is a Muslim speciality. It adds an undefinable richness and warmth to an already remarkable dish.

In a large, ungreased, oven-proof casserole, heat the chick-pea flour over medium-high heat. Stir constantly, until it is khaki colour and fragrant. Pour it into the blender jar and add all the remaining ingredients in this section. Set aside without blending.

5 *Tbs. chick-pea flour*
½ *tsp. powdered coriander*
¼ *tsp. turmeric*
1½ *tsp. granulated sugar*
¾ *tsp. salt*
¼ *tsp. ground hot red pepper*
½ *Tbs. unflavoured yogurt*

In the same casserole, wilt the spinach without adding water. Turn it into a colander and press out all the liquid. Chop fine and add to other ingredients in blender. Set aside.

1 *lb. spinach leaves, well washed and picked*

Dry out the same casserole. Heat the butter in it and fry the cream gently until it is golden brown and a bit condensed. Pour it with the butter into the blender. Blend all the contents to a fine paste.

3 *Tbs. clarified butter*
½ *cup whipping cream*

Stir the ginger into the paste but do not blend. Oil the hands lightly. Divide the paste into 12 round balls and cover with a damp cloth until ready to fry. (They will keep in the refrigerator several hours this way.)

3 *tsp. scraped and minced ginger root, or* 1 *tsp. powdered ginger*

Preheat oven to 300° F.

3 *Tbs. clarified butter*
4 *inches of cinnamon stick*
4 *cloves*
5 *cardamom pods*
½ *cup chopped onion*

In the same casserole, heat the butter and fry all ingredients in this section until they are golden brown, stirring constantly. Set aside off heat when ready.

1 *cup white, long-grain rice (not precooked)*
2 *tsp. powdered coriander*
1 *tsp. salt*
1 *tsp. sugar*
2½ *cups boiling water*

Wash the rice until the water runs clear. Drain thoroughly and stir into the fried spices. Return casserole to medium heat and continue stirring until rice is pale brown. Add all remaining ingredients in this section. Reduce heat to low and cook uncovered until all the liquid is absorbed. Fluff rice with a fork and gently fold in the fried spinach balls. Cover and put in preheated oven for 15–20 minutes.

¼ *cup unsalted cashew nuts*
fresh rose petals, rinsed

Garnish with nuts and roses and serve hot in the casserole.

Serve with a light meat dish.

SERVES 4

Pullao to Administer Garlic to Those Who Would Avoid It

(Saadaa Pullao)

The old people say that garlic is a healing force, originating in the divine essence of life. They say that it was created long, long ago when Garuda, the divine sunbird, carried away the beverage of immortality from the gods, who guarded it jealously, and flew hastily away to deliver it to his old mother. While he was flying, a drop was spilled from the vessel, shaken by the rush of Garuda's wings. In the very spot where this potent drop fell, garlic sprang up from the ground—acrid in flavour, pungent in taste, light and swift in its effect.

For many, many years thereafter there was a heated debate about the properties of garlic. Some claimed that it was one of the most beneficial foods on earth and called it "nectar of the gods." They claimed that garlic could harden the gums and make a man robust; it could fill out the hair and fingernails and put colour in the cheek. Ladies

who used it were sure to retain the bloom of youth, "shedding neither their firm breasts nor their personal charm." It was even thought to be an aphrodisiac.

On the other hand, foes of garlic claimed that, like onions and leeks, it must never be eaten by respectable people. Neither cloves nor camphor nor nutmeg nor betel can remove its odour, they said, for garlic buries itself in the lungs and cannot be persuaded to depart. Besides, said orthodox Hindus, it resembles the head, the plant is killed when we uproot it, and it was brought by the Muslims. We can never, never touch it; for we are strict vegetarians and do not believe in taking life or in touching a Muslim plant. Even the Buddha adhered to these beliefs, though basically on the grounds of offensive odour.

Yet it was one of the Buddha's faithful followers who devised the following recipe, believing that the excellent qualities of garlic were necessary even to a Buddhist monk (who should rightfully abstain): "A cow must be kept without grass for three nights. She should then be given stalks of garlic, mixed with her grass, to eat. The butter and milk of this happy cow may then be quietly served at table, preserving the health of the populace and the general sense of well-being."

There is an alternative recipe, should anyone not have a cow. It calls for an impressive amount of garlic, but not one piece has to be peeled! All the excellent properties are still there, but the long, slow cooking mellows sharpness and odour.

At least 3 hours before cooking, wash the rice until the water runs clear. Leave to soak in water to cover.

1 *lb. white, long-grain rice (not precooked)*

Place the shank pieces in a large, deep pot. Pour over 8 cups water and bring to a boil. Skim. Tie all remaining ingredients in this section in a cheesecloth bag. Add this bag to the water and continue boiling partially covered until meat is completely tender and broth is well flavoured (about 1 hour). Remove the cheesecloth bag. Cool and

2 *lbs. lamb shanks, broken into 3-inch pieces*
2½ *Tbs. salt*
2 *Tbs. powdered coriander*

5 *whole large heads of garlic, unpeeled*
2 *cups thickly sliced but unpeeled onion*
1½ *Tbs. scraped and grated ginger root, or ½ Tbs. powdered ginger*
seeds of 8 cardamom pods, or ¼ tsp. powdered cardamom
¼ *tsp. black cumin seed, or ¼ tsp. caraway seed*
1 *inch of cinnamon stick*
5 *cloves*
4 *peppercorns*

wring its juices into the broth and discard contents of bag. Remove and drain meat pieces and reserve off heat. Reserve the broth.

½ *cup clarified butter*
1 *cup evenly chopped onion*
6 *cardamom pods*
4 *cloves*
½ *tsp. black peppercorns*
2 *inches of cinnamon stick*
½ *tsp. cumin seed*
¼ *cup unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with fork*

In a large, heavy casserole that can be lidded, heat the butter and fry onions until they are just turning colour. Stir in all the whole spices and sauté for 5 minutes. Add reserved meat pieces and brown with the butter and spices, stirring constantly. Add yogurt when necessary to prevent sticking. Partially cover and cook over medium heat until all liquid is evaporated.

Drain rice and stir into meat. Correct reserved broth to 5 cups. Add to meat, bring to a boil, and cook uncovered until rice is half cooked (about 10 minutes; test by rubbing a grain between fingers; its center should be hard but not brittle), stirring with fork only if necessary. Cover pot tightly and steam over lowest possible heat, preferably on an asbestos pad, until all the liquid is absorbed.

At this point, the pullao can be held up to 2 hours in a warm oven or reheated much later in a 300° oven.

Serve with light, green salad or vegetable. SERVES 6

Kababs

There is an old Muslim fable about a vain simpleton who left India to seek glory in far-off Persia. Having lived there quite a while and acquired the language, he bethought himself to go back to India. So proud was he, however, that he scorned to speak his native language and died of thirst in India while crying *"Aab! Aab!"*—which means "Water! Water!" in Persian.

A few things in India—more sensible than that fellow—flourish in the absence of water. An excellent example is the famous kabab. Let an old cookbook explain thoroughly:

The word "kabab" is made of two words: *kum* (little) and *aab* (water) and it is a corruption thereof. It means that kababs are made by using very little water. In Muslim cookery all the recipes that come under kabab are made by applying spices, and they have little sauce.

In Sanskrit there is a big book on cookery, *Kshema Kutuhal,* in which there are some preparations under *kum aab,* which are similar preparations. From this it appears that the kabab of Muslim cookery is originally Hindu but later on, owing to Muslim domination, it became a Muslim preparation.

Kababs are also made of some lentils and vegetables, but usually kababs are made of meat. The articles used in making kababs are: salt, chilis, hot spices, lentils, poppy seed, eggs, cream, condensed sweetened cream, almonds, yogurt, and lemons.

Kababs are not cooked by adding water to the meat. They are prepared in the following different ways: they are fried in ample clarified butter (*Taladi Kababs*), they are

dressed in lesser quantities of clarified butter (*Shammi Kababs*), the meat is held above the embers and roasted (*Sheke Huye Kababs*), the meat is heated in ovens (*Bhunje Huye Kababs*), or the meat is attached to iron rods and, while these are held on embers, it is roasted (*Seekh ka Kabab; seekh* means iron rods).

Meat required for any kabab depends upon which kabab is desired and it has to be cut as mentioned in that particular preparation. For example, if *Parsande* are desired, the meat has to be cut into thin slices. They call these slices *Parche*. Many times the meat has to be cut into mincemeat and balls are prepared thereof, which are then fried. These balls, the Muslims call as *kofte*. Preparing a whole hen, after removing its intestines, etcetera, and by applying *garam masala* (heating spices), is called *Murag Musallam*. *Musallam* means whole.

In order that the meat may be cooked soft, pieces of unripe fig or papaya should be added. This general information has been given in short here so that it may be known what kabab is and what kind of thing it is.

—Rajasthani cookbook, eighteenth century

Small and Round Kababs

(Shammi Kabab)

½ cup split dried chick-peas
1 inch of cinnamon stick
seeds of 8 cardamom pods, or ¼ tsp. powdered cardamom
4 peppercorns
¼ tsp. cumin
2 tsp. salt

In a heavy, ungreased skillet or griddle, roast the chick-peas over medium heat until they are golden brown and fragrant. Turn them into a medium-sized saucepan. Add all remaining ingredients in this section. Cover with 3 cups water and boil uncovered until the peas crumble (not disintegrate) between the fingers and all water is absorbed.

5–10 *whole dried red chili peppers, seeded (to taste)*
4 *Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root*
1 *cup coarsely chopped onion*
1 *lb. ground lamb (or beef)*
2 *Tbs. unflavoured yogurt*

One-half cup at a time, grind the cooked meat to a thick paste in the blender. Add yogurt when necessary to lubricate. (Do not add more than 2 Tbs.)

In a small bowl, mix together all ingredients in this section. Take about 1½ Tbs. of the meat paste and pat it into a thin circle in the palm of one hand. Spoon ½ tsp. filling from the small bowl into the center of this circle and wrap the meat over it. Press between both palms to form a flat, round patty with no cracks. Continue thus until approximately 20 patties are prepared. They can either be held up to 6 hours under a damp cloth or fried as soon as they are prepared.

Cover the bottom of a heavy, medium-sized skillet with a thin coating of butter. Sauté the patties over medium heat, a few at a time. Press with spatula and turn only once. Add extra butter as necessary to prevent sticking. The patties should be golden, but not crisp. Serve hot or at room temperature as hors d'oeuvres.

¾ *cup minced onion*
½ *tsp. salt*
1–2 *whole fresh, green chili peppers, seeded and minced*
2 *Tbs. minced fresh mint, or* 1½ *tsp. dried mint*
1 *Tbs. fresh lime juice*

clarified butter or vegetable oil for frying

MAKES 20 KABABS

A legume becomes acceptable by thickening; a wife by wearing herself out.

—Proverb of Rajasthan

Wife-Saving Salad
(Sukhi Dal)

There are probably as many different legumes in India as there are types of wives—and as many ways of serving them as well! As they are most often prepared, legumes cook long

and slowly, melting into a savoury soup. This salad is a littl
different, a Muslim speciality. In this instance neither doe
the legume thicken, nor does the wife wear herself out
Flavourful spices coat each little legume and the wife en
joys a fine, crunchy salad.

2 *cups urad dal (available at specialty shops)*

One hour before cooking, place the *dal* in a small sauce
pan and wash until the water runs clear. Leave to soak i
water to cover, one-half inch.

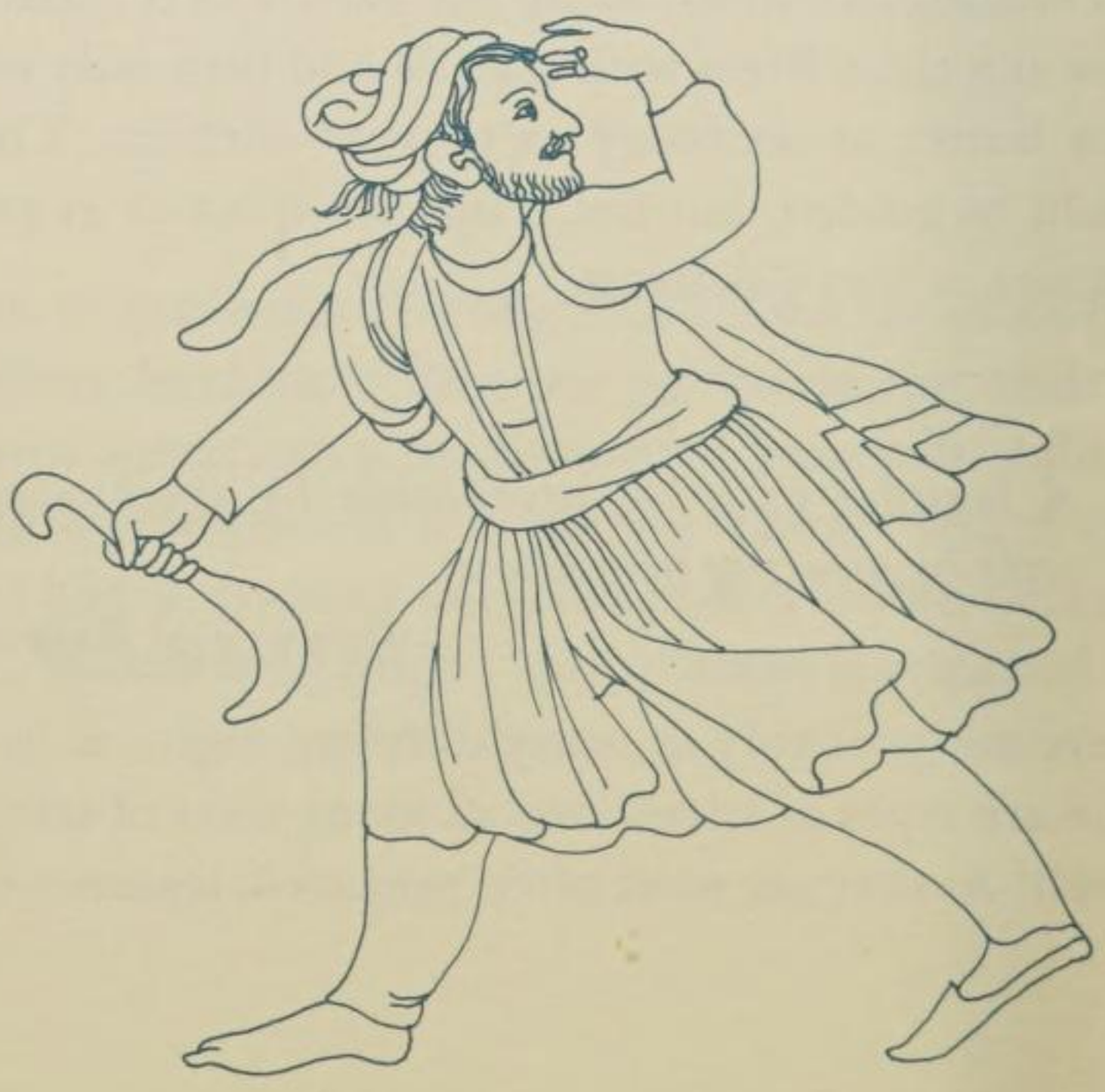
2 *Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root*
5 *Tbs. minced onion*
2½ *Tbs. minced garlic*
4–8 *dried whole red chili peppers, seeded and minced (to taste)*
2 *tsp. salt*

When the *dal* has soaked for 1 hour, bring it to a boil i
its soaking water. Reduce to simmer. Add all ingredient
in this section and continue cooking until *dal* is tende
but not crumbly (about 30 minutes). Pour off exces
water. Set aside off heat.

3 *Tbs. clarified butter or vegetable oil*
½ *cup onion, cut in half from top to root and across the grain into thin, even slices*
5 *small, whole garlic buds, peeled*
2–4 *tsp. seeded and minced fresh, green chili pepper (optional)*

In a small skillet, heat butter and fry onions until brow
and crisp. Remove onions with slotted spoon, drain, an
reserve. Heat remaining butter to crackling. Keep lid clos
by. Drop in garlic buds. Cover and shake skillet for 1 min
ute over fire. Uncover and toss in *dal* and chilis. Mix well
Taste for salt and serve warm or at room temperature.

SERVES 6 AS A SIDE DISH



Instant Eggs
(Andee ka Hogina)

Technical brother to the *urad dal* recipe is this other—even quicker and simpler. The eggs in the dish bring to mind an old dance, one for which Palanpur was famous. A beautiful young girl—agile and quick—would fasten some eggs to her hat. Whirling like a top, she would spin them on strings, never stopping till the music died. Stopping, of course, was a trick in itself. "Instant Eggs" were born of her mistakes.

Break eggs into a small bowl. Beat together with chili flakes and salt. Reserve next to stove.

In a small skillet, heat butter and fry onions until brown and just crisping. Stir in eggs. Press and turn until they are cooked to taste. Garnish with chili and coriander leaf. Serve immediately.

4 eggs
1–2 tsp. dried red chili-pepper flakes
½ tsp. salt

2 Tbs. clarified butter
½ cup finely minced onion
1–2 Tbs. seeded and minced fresh, green chili pepper
1 Tbs. minced fresh coriander leaf (cilantro), or 1 Tbs. minced parsley

SERVES 2

Whole Spices, Ground Meat

(Kharde Masale ka Kima)

In Palanpur, as in all the Princely States, the royal butcher is an exalted personage. Whether his master is Hindu or Muslim, the butcher himself is most often Muslim. Both habit and religion disqualify Hindus from meat-cutting, whereas Muslims have great expertise. The royal butcher must have—among other things—very agile and expert feet. He sits low to the ground on a wooden platform and grasps a long knife with his toes. His sharp blade falls and rises with remarkable skill while his strong hands are free to guide the meat. Very few dishes call for special cutting; most often meat is simply cut in chunks. Ground meat, such as in this recipe, will come wrapped in a *jilli,* the membranous lining of the sheep or goat stomach. In this recipe, the *jilli* is removed and the meat is fried very quickly—the whole process takes but half an hour—with very impressive results.

3-inch cinnamon stick
8 *cloves*
1 *tsp. black peppercorns*
1 *tsp. cumin*
6 *cardamom pods*
2 *tsp. coriander seed*

Place all ingredients in this section in a heavy, medium-sized skillet. Stir constantly over medium heat until they are toasted and fragrant. Set aside on a plate.

½ *cup clarified butter or oil*
2 *cups evenly chopped onions*
2 *Tbs. evenly chopped garlic*
3 *Tbs. scraped and evenly chopped ginger root*

In the same skillet, heat the butter. Stir in onions, garlic and ginger. Continue stirring over low heat until the onions are clear and tender. Stir in toasted spices and continue to cook until onions are beginning to crisp.

2 *lbs. lean ground lamb (or beef)*
1–3 *tsp. hot red chili pepper flakes (to taste)*
2½ *tsp. salt*

Raise heat to medium and stir in all ingredients in this section. Continue to stir until meat is browned. Cover skillet tightly and reduce to lowest possible heat. Cook for 20 minutes without opening.

1 *Tbs. seeded and evenly chopped fresh, green chili pepper (optional)*

If you are cooking in oil, drain off the excess. Toss in coriander leaf and chilis just before serving.

1 *Tbs. minced fresh coriander leaf, or* 1 *Tbs. minced parsley*
1–2 *Tbs. seeded and minced fresh, green chili pepper (optional)*

Serve with rice or chapati.

SERVES 6

Addled Brains Palanpur

(Bheja)

Yet another quick dish is this mouth-watering brain. Like the meat for Whole Spices, Ground Meat, it may also come from the butcher wrapped in a *jilli;* but this time the *jilli* will be left on during the steaming—a natural container for the meat. Small portions of this dish should suffice; it is heavy and quite flavourful, guaranteed by traditionalists to clarify thought and "reorder the deranged metabolism," as only a dish of brains can.

1 *lb. lamb (or calf) brains, washed but with membrane intact*

In a small saucepan, simmer the brains in water to cover for 15 minutes. Drain and cool. Carefully remove the thin membrane. Set aside.

Meanwhile grind all ingredients in this section to a fine paste in blender with ¼ cup water. Set aside on a plate.

¼ *cup chopped onion*
5 *peeled garlic cloves*
1 *Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root, or* 2 *tsp. powdered ginger*
1–2 *tsp. ground hot red chili pepper (to taste)*
½ *tsp. salt*

In a small skillet, heat the butter and fry onions until brown and crisp. Off heat, remove with slotted spoon. Drain and reserve. In remaining butter, fry the blender paste gently for 10 minutes. Add 1 Tbs. water whenever necessary to prevent sticking. When butter bubbles up through the paste, add the brain. Gently press and turn it with a spatula until it is partially mashed. Add browned onions and continue until the whole resembles ground meat. Raise heat. Toss in chili and coriander leaf. Stir for one minute and serve immediately on hot toast.

¼ cup clarified butter
1 cup onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices
1 Tbs. seeded and minced fresh, green chili pepper (optional)
2 Tbs. minced fresh coriander leaf (cilantro), or 2 Tbs. minced parsley
4 slices crisp toast

SERVES 4 AS A FIRST COURSE OR LUNCHEON ENTREE

This is the dish a Nawab calls for after a very long and trying day. When an elephant is sick, when he misses the tiger, when half of the harem has flu, he wants something simple, warming, and friendly. So he calls for this unpretentious dish.

Meat with Any Vegetables
(Gobi Gosht)

Drop all ingredients in this section into blender and grind to a smooth paste with ¼ cup water. Place blender jar and contents next to stove ready for next step.

1 cup coarsely chopped onion
1 Tbs. peeled garlic buds
2 tsp. scraped and minced ginger root, or ½ tsp. powdered ginger
2–3 tsp. ground hot red pepper (to taste)
1 tsp. turmeric
3 tsp. powdered coriander
2 tsp. salt

Muslim noblemen feasting in the traditional manner.

1 *cup clarified butter*
½ *cup onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices*
1½ *lbs. lean, boneless lamb, cut into 3-inch cubes*

In a heavy, medium-sized saucepan, heat the butter and fry onions until golden but not crisp. Off heat, stir in the blender paste. Return to medium heat. Stir. Cook covered for 5 minutes. Stir in meat. Simmer covered over low heat for 20 minutes. Shake the pot occasionally but do not open.

1½ *cups hot water*

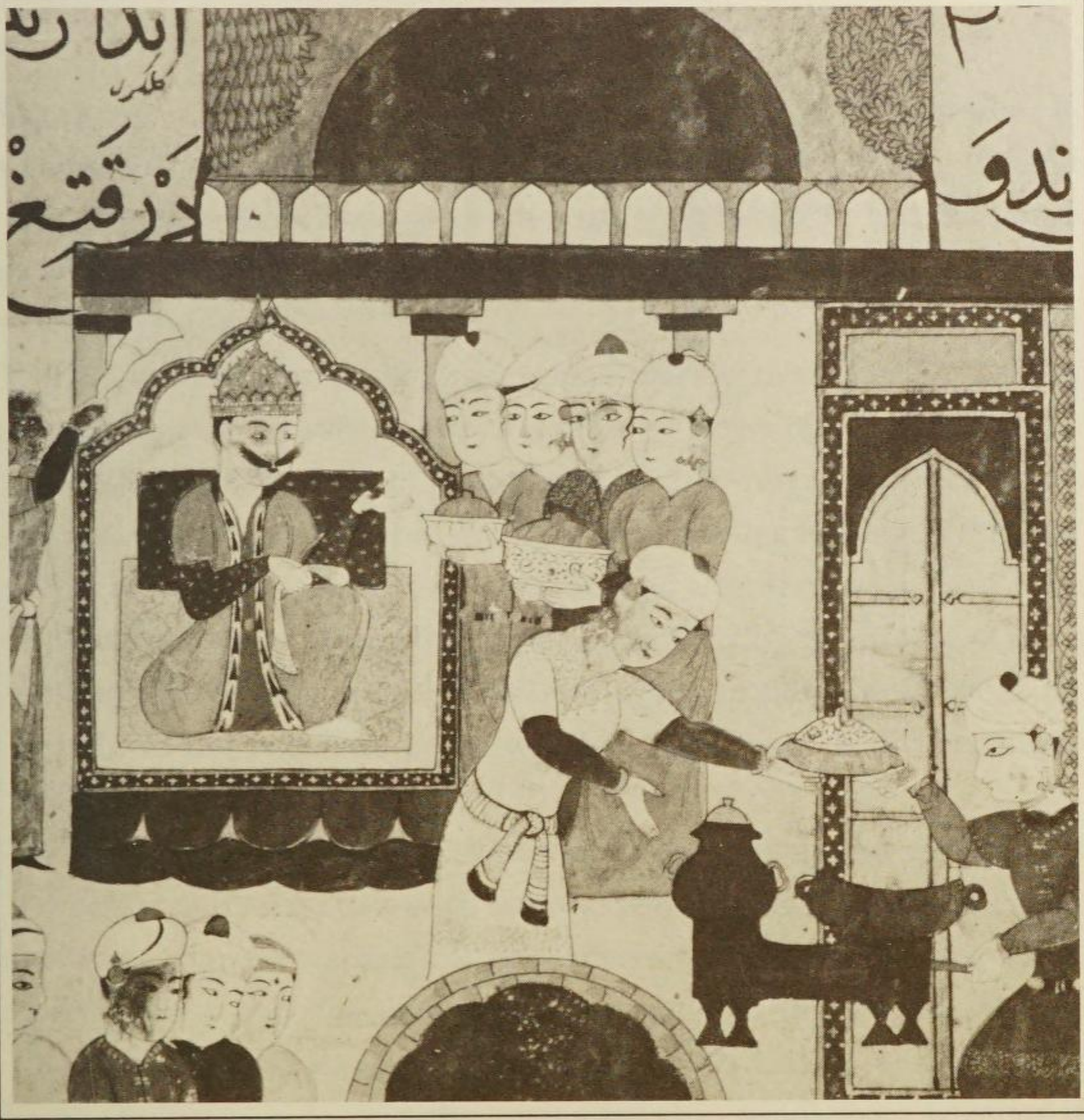
Add hot water and continue to cook, uncovered, stirring occasionally until meat cuts cleanly with a fork but does not fall apart. All spicy smells should be mellowed and the liquid reduced to a thick gravy.

3 *Tbs. unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with a fork*
1 *cup raw vegetable pieces (cauliflower, carrot, turnip, or potato) cut into thumbnail pieces*
1 *cup hot water*
2 *Tbs. minced fresh coriander leaf (cilantro), or 2 Tbs. minced parsley*
1–2 *Tbs. fresh lime juice*

Stir in yogurt and vegetable. Cover. Cook for 5 minutes over medium heat, shaking the pan occasionally without uncovering. Add 1 cup hot water and cook uncovered until meat and vegetable are tender. Garnish with coriander leaf and lime juice. Serve hot with brown bread or buns. (Keeps well.)

SERVES 4

Part II



CENTRAL INDIA

Overleaf: An illustration from the Nimat Namah.

This is a handful of cardamoms
This is a lump of ghee
This is millet and chilis and rice
And supper for thee and me
—*Rudyard Kipling,* Kim

Kim's words might well have been spoken by many of the travellers he met and many of the folk whose villages he passed on his journey through India. The Bombay–Agra Road, which he trod with his guru, is India's main highway and heart, channelling pilgrims, soldiers, and commerce from North India to the West Coast.

The road is well known to be dangerous as it draws near Gwalior. Central India's northernmost Princely State, Gwalior is renowned for its *dacoits.* These agile bandits rob merchant princes and wealthy pilgrims—and even the monkeys seem wary, racing away at the sight of a traveller to cling to the nearest tree. Very few bullock carts are seen on the road after the sun has set. Their drivers huddle in groups under banyan trees, lighted by the flicker of dung fires. Smoking placidly, they watch their bullocks graze while bread cooks and lentils bubble in the pot. The bread will be millet, as in Kim's verse, but rarely will there be any ghee.

Ghee (clarified butter) is kept, like cardamom, for special dinners and feasts. To be sure, there is, in a good harvest year, no dearth of these expensive feasts; caste dinners are held for every event that marks the progression of life: pregnancy, birth, the naming of a son and his investiture with the sacred thread, birthdays, deaths, anniversaries of deaths, even the completion of a house. The list is as long as the great road that winds from Gwalior to Indore and eventually to Bombay.

Anyone who travels that road will see a good deal of Central India. He will not, however, be able to describe its countryside in a simple sentence or two. The minute he says that the road was flat, and envisions its treeless plains, he remembers the *ghats,* the great natural stairways that wind up and down the

Malwa Plateau. From their heights, he can see, in winter, vast fields of yellow mustard; and in spring, acres of red and white poppies. Scrubby trees that range over these ghats sag under their huge withered leaves, which offer precious little shade in summer. There is likely to be a fort perched somewhere on a cliff, or at least an ancient stone rampart. Staring across the flat plains below, its rusty cannons are like blind eyes. Only the monkeys pay attention to these forts—they and the screeching parrots. The traveller moves on past them unconcerned, ignoring even the sweet, scrub jungle honey that is nestled here and there in their eaves.

Honey is considered an elixir of life but is not part of the daily diet. A tiny bit will be taken now and then at religious ceremonies; otherwise, it is left for the bees. Not so, the tall stalks of sugar cane that green Central India in winter. Their sweetness is savoured greedily, especially by mischievous children. The traveller descending from the ghats to the plains will stop to cut a stalk or two. Seating himself in a bit of shade, he will shave away the tough exterior, sinking his teeth in the crisp, sweet fibres and sucking out the last drop of juice. Little boys won't even bother to peel. They plunge into a tall stand of cane and, beating through the jungle of green stalks, emerge with a half-chewed one in hand. Meanwhile crow pheasants and angry partridge have risen out of their shelter, screeching away in all directions. The little boys pay no attention, but the traveller with a musket, or even a sling, immediately thinks of his dinner.

Game, at one time, was a large part of nonvegetarian diet in many parts of India. Central India—aside from its famous tiger, panther, and black bear—had blue bull, black buck, chinkara gazelle, and wild fowl—all of which went into the pot. Often game was grilled over an open fire or made into spicy pickles; occasionally it was curried: small snipe and sand grouse tenderly simmered in yogurt and spices, or wild goose with turnips, baked overnight in the gentlest of earthen ovens. Other birds, the noisy crows and parrots, were less useful and often annoying. But travellers would smile at their un-

ending battle with little boys in every village along the road. The boys, charged with protecting the family crops from these mischievous winged thieves, would spend all morning beating pans and shouting or whirling their little slings, but every afternoon the birds would come back when the boys fell asleep in the shade.

If nightfall found the traveller by chance in a village, his evening would be a bit more lively. Central Indian villages are life itself—in every colour, shape, and condition. Those who have the means gather at a tea stall to smoke and talk and, sometimes, drink tea. It may have been the British who brought this beverage into fashion, but Indians have their own variations. Tea stalls along the great highroads, especially the Bombay—Agra, offer different strengths and qualities of tea: according to his needs, the traveller (or, now, the truck driver) may have his tea leaves boiled with water; or with water, milk, and sugar; or just with pure milk and sugar. His choice depends upon his means and upon the distance he has to cover. Tea is sold by the cupful as "two-kilometer tea"—or twenty- or forty- or two-hundred-. The greater the distance, the more the milk and sugar and the stronger the tea leaf.

In some tea stalls, there is also food, typically Central Indian: *dal bafla,* a lentil soup eaten with a ball of baked wheat dough; potatoes flavoured with turmeric and black salt (a curious-tasting mineral) ; often a stew of vegetables —eggplant, onions, and okra; and occasionally some *seov,* a snack of chick-pea flour dough, spiced and fried like tiny, crisp little noodles. If it is the season for making cane sugar—January, February, March—there may be great, lumpy cakes of brown sugar too, bristling with fresh peanuts. These unrefined sugar cakes, known as *gurd,* are often eaten as sweets; or they are used, without the peanuts, as flavouring for vegetables and *dals*. Along with tamarind, asafoetida, and black mustard seed, the flavour of this unrefined brown sugar is the flavour of Central India.

Central Indian rulers, like Central Indian food, come from very simple origins. Many were generals or governors for other, larger dynasties, which

then decayed, leaving them independent and sovereign—maharajas of Princely States. This is even true of Hyderabad, a world unto itself by virtue of its great size and wealth. Hyderabad is included in Central India only geographically. Politically and culturally, it stands alone. Being Muslim, its ruling family differs from those of Hindu background in habit and in tradition. It does not, for example, claim its descent from a cobra's kindness, as do so many Hindu ruling families.

It is surprising how history has seen fit to bless so many Hindu rulers with this semi-miraculous inception. Nine out of ten—according to the talismans displayed on their family crest—were once shielded in infancy by the hood of a cobra, who benignly sheltered them from the sun's fiery rays and thus endowed them with great power. Miraculously favoured by the sacred serpent, they grew into demi-gods and each founded his separate dynasty.

The fact that the parents of these princes were shepherds or cowherds left its mark on the princely plastic arts. Central Indian palaces of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were simply large versions of a village house: white-washed walls, dung floors, and long, white bolster pillows for thrones. Not until the nineteenth century did they lose this refreshing simplicity. The thrones have remained the same up to this day, but the princes and their palaces have changed. With the advent of the British in India and the opportunity to travel abroad, princes became potentates and their palaces a potpourri of architecture. There is a bit of Bauhaus, some Italian rococo, and a great many mini-Versailles.

Fortunately the setting remains Central Indian—vast wastelands and rocky plateaus—and the food remains, as it has always been, simple and savoury.

On the crest of the mountain is a great plain, on which are sumptuous palaces with many balconies and windows of various kinds of stone, and delightful gardens irrigated from many crystal springs, where cypress and other lovely trees raise their hands aloft so as to be visible from a distance. Within this fortress is manufactured much oil of Jasmine, the best to be found in the kingdom, the whole of the level ground on that summit being covered with that shrub.

—Niccolo Manucci

Eight

Gwalior

Perhaps because it was so abundant in the fort, jasmine found its place in the kitchens of Gwalior as well, prepared with rice exactly as recorded in a cookbook dedicated to the maharaja:

"Boil water in a vessel. Get jasmine flowers and remove green portion from them. Tie a few of the flowers in a kerchief. Prepare four such bags of flowers.

"Hold a bag over a vessel and pour two ladles of boiling water on the bag carefully. Collect such water of the four bags. Keep it separate. Also keep boiling water ready at hand.

"Get a pound of good quality rice. After washing it well, add boiling water to it and place a vessel containing rice on the fire.

"When the rice is half cooked, add the above fragrant water, cover it with a piece of cloth and place on it a brass cover plate. Now keep the vessel on embers and when all the water had dried the rice is scratched and served.

"This rice emits the fragrant smell of jasmine."

Few things about Gwalior State are as refined and soft as this recipe. Life in Central India was no easier than in Rajasthan. Enemy forces endlessly assaulted the kingdom —brother Princes, Mughal Emperors, the British. Only the hill fort could survive such a life. No one knows exactly when it was built; but sheltered in its walls are a multitude of kitchens, for the fort housed both prisoners and

princes. Whatever luxury has crept into cuisine here came with the conquering Mughals. But the accents and spices of Gwalior have endured: poppy seed, asafoetida, unusual meats. They are typical of Central Indian cuisine.

Poppy Seed Fish
(Macchi ka Acchar)

He who is smitten with food looks down.
He who is smitten with the sword looks up.
—Proverb of Central India

And he who is smitten with the poppy seed has looked towards the Gwalior fort, where the Mughal Emperors were wont to send out-of-favour relatives and friends. No one ever complained of the treatment there because no one ever returned. Not that they met with a violent end; Mughal etiquette would never permit that. Instead they were slowly and quietly disposed of by small doses of deadly "poppy water," a popular poison brought to perfection in the confines of the Gwalior fort. The best poppy water was not pure poppy but a brew of the seed mixed with essence of *datwa,* or belladonna, the deadliest flower in India.

The predominant flavour (and texture) in this dish is the very same all-purpose poppy. But this crisp fish dish is not the least bit dangerous. It makes an intriguing snack.

⅓ cup grated, unsweetened coconut
6 Tbs. poppy seed
6 Tbs. sesame seed

Put a heavy, ungreased skillet over medium heat. Roast the coconut, then poppy, and finally sesame seeds in this skillet until they are fragrant and toast brown. As each is toasted, transfer it to the blender and pulverize at high speed, scraping and shaking the jar. Pour them all together into a deep bowl. Set aside.

1 Tbs. minced garlic
1 Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root
4 Tbs. minced onion

Without washing the blender jar, drop into it the chili and minced ingredients and 4 Tbs. water. Blend on high speed until the mixture becomes a smooth paste. Transfer it into a small dish and keep handy near the stove.

¼ *tsp. ground hot red pepper*

Toss the fish pieces in a mixture of salt and turmeric. Sprinkle with lime juice. In a 10-inch wok, heat the oil to smoking. (Alternatively, heat enough oil in a small saucepan to cover to a depth of 3 inches.) Fry the fish, three or four pieces at a time, until they are golden brown and crisp. With a slotted spoon, drain and remove them to the bowl of roasted spices.

1 *lb. fillets of white, freshwater fish, cut into bite-size chunks*
½ *tsp. turmeric*
½ *tsp. salt*
1 *Tbs. fresh lime juice*
¾ *cup sesame or vegetable oil*

Toss the garlic and ginger in the remaining oil and fry very quickly. (Tip the pan if necessary.) When just browning, remove with slotted spoon into the fish bowl. Repeat this procedure with the chilis.

2 *tsp. minced garlic*
1 *Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root*
2 *whole, dried red chili peppers (optional)*

Finally stir the reserved blender mixture into the remaining oil. (Add 1 Tbs. oil if necessary to prevent sticking.) Reduce heat and stir until the raw smell is entirely gone and spices have become khaki in colour (about 10 minutes). Pour the entire contents of the pan into the bowl of fish.

Using a wooden spoon, carefully toss in all remaining ingredients, so that each fish piece is thoroughly coated. Serve on toothpicks with slices of lime, as a main course—with white rice and a light, green vegetable—or as a snack.

⅓ *cup fresh lime juice*
1 *tsp. salt—or to taste*
2 *Tbs. minced fresh coriander leaf (cilantro) or 2 Tbs. minced parsley*

SERVES 2 AS A MAIN COURSE, 4 AS A SNACK

Central Indian Tripe

(Banga)

The trick in dealing with tripe is to cut it into small pieces. Thus you get the unique flavour, but not the disconcerting texture. Combining that flavour with coconut sounds a highly unlikely proposition. But chili and coconut complement one another, balancing sweetness and heat; and together they make a sauce so well suited to tripe that the dish is a Gwalior favourite.

½ cup scraped and minced ginger root
½ cup unpeeled garlic buds
2 tsp. salt
1½ lbs. honeycomb tripe, well washed, but uncut

Four hours before serving, purée garlic and ginger in blender with ½ cup water. Put this purée in a large saucepan with salt and tripe. Cover with water and bring to a boil. Continue boiling for 1–4 hours or until the tripe is completely tender (some tripe is sold partially precooked).

1 lb. lean, boneless lamb, cut into 1-inch cubes

Remove the tripe with a slotted spoon and rinse under cold water. Cook the lamb in the remaining broth, simmering until tender. Meanwhile, scrape the rough lining off the tripe with a sharp knife and cut into bite-size pieces. When the lamb is tender, discard the broth and begin the next step.

¼ cup clarified butter or vegetable oil
1 cup coarsely and evenly chopped onion
2 tsp. ground hot red chili pepper
2 tsp. salt
2 cups coconut milk (see page 303)

In a medium-sized saucepan, heat the butter and fry onions until just beginning to brown. Remove pan from heat. Mix red pepper, salt, and 1 Tbs. water, and stir into the onions. Return to heat and stir until the water evaporates. Add chopped tripe and lamb pieces and 1 cup of the coconut milk. Simmer uncovered until the liquid is absorbed. Add remaining coconut milk and simmer, stirring, for 5 minutes. Serve immediately over plain, white rice.

SERVES 6–8

Ancestral Stewpot
(Berbat)

The technique and tastes in this unusual dish are typical of Central India. Almost everything is cooked before being added to the meat: the bits of grain are roasted and powdered as a thickener for the sauce; the spices are fried before they are ground. Thus each flavour in this stew stands out distinctly, yet the whole is harmonious and satisfying.

In a heavy, medium-sized saucepan, heat oil over high heat. Tip pan and fry onions in collected oil until brown and crisp. Off heat, stir in all remaining ingredients in this section. Mix well. Cover with 4 cups water and simmer over low heat.

1 Tbs. vegetable oil
2 Tbs. finely chopped onion
2½ tsp. scraped and grated ginger root, or ¾ tsp. powdered ginger
2 tsp. finely minced garlic
2 tsp. salt
½ tsp. turmeric
1 lb. lamb, any inexpensive cut, chopped into 1-inch bits

Meanwhile, toast wheat, rice, and chick-peas separately in a heavy, ungreased skillet. Stir constantly over medium heat until each is brown and fragrant. Pulverize all together in blender. Remove 1 cup broth from simmering meat. Sift the pulverized grains into this broth. Mix thoroughly and return to meat. Continue simmering.

1 Tbs. whole wheat grains
1 Tbs. rice
1 Tbs. dried chick-peas

In the same skillet, heat oil and fry onions until brown and crisp. Off heat, remove them with a slotted spoon directly into the blender. In the remaining oil, fry all remaining ingredients in this section very briefly over high heat, stirring constantly. Pour into the blender with the oil. Add ½ cup water and grind to a thick paste. Add ½ cup additional water and grind as smooth as possible.

2 Tbs. vegetable oil
½ cup onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices
2 Tbs. powdered coriander
1 tsp. cumin seed
½ tsp. poppy seed
½ tsp. turmeric

¼ *tsp. ground hot red pepper*
¼ *tsp. black pepper powder*
¼ *tsp. powdered cardamom*
2 *cloves*
¼ *cup grated, unsweetened coconut*

Stir this paste into the simmering meat. Test it for tenderness. Add up to 1 cup water as necessary to tenderize completely. Cover and simmer until done (about 30 minutes). This meat should have at least 2 cups of semithick sauce.

SERVES 4

Serve with plain, white rice.

Solid Spinach
(Patel Bhaji)

Picture a vegetarian. He is thin, rather pale—a spectral being accustomed to quiet and prayer. Now picture the Gwalior man; does this description fit? On the contrary. He is tough, and so scornful of vegetables that they rarely appear on his table. "Talking like vegetables!" he will say of a dolt. There are certain days, however, when meat is forbidden—days of fasting for ancestors and gods. On these days the humble vegetable must come into its own; and this spinach is one of the favourites. The Maharaja would eat only this dish and always declared himself well satisfied.

1 *lb. spinach leaves, washed and chopped*
¼ *cup chick-peas*

Wilt the spinach in a deep saucepan. Add 3 cups water and chick-peas. Cook covered over medium heat until the chick-peas are completely tender (about 30 minutes).

2 *tsp. dried mango powder (amchur) or* 1 *Tbs. fresh lime juice*
2 *Tbs. brown sugar*

Add mango powder and sugar. Stir. Mix flour and salt with 1½ cups water and add to spinach. Stir. Cover and cook over medium heat until the vegetable thickens slightly.

¼ cup chick-pea flour
1½ tsp. salt

2 Tbs. sesame or vegetable oil
¼ tsp. cumin seed
¾ tsp. black mustard seed

Just before serving, heat oil to smoking in a small saucepan. Keep the lid close by. Tip the pan and put in the cumin and mustard seed. Cover immediately and shake over fire for 1 minute. Pour spices and oil into spinach. Stir and serve steaming hot in a rice ring or in individual soufflé bowls.

SERVES 4

Twenty-Four-Hour Turnip
(Shubdeg)

Being a maharaja in the days of yore was largely a matter of conquer or be conquered, and rulers of Gwalior spent a good deal of time engaged in encountering the foe. The favourite method of capturing enemy forts was to send up their bastions a large and patient lizard, renowned for its ability to cling to walls. A rope attached to the stalwart beast made ideal access to a sleeping fort, which would soon belong to Gwalior. A night's work done, the troops returned home ravenous and feasted themselves on this slow-cooking dish. They had, of course, put it on gentle coals long before sallying forth.

One day before serving: 2 hours before cooking, pulverize the garlic with 4 cups water in blender. Pour into deep mixing bowl, stir in salt, and soak turnips in this liquid for 2 hours, unrefrigerated.

⅓ cup garlic cloves unpeeled
1 lb. small turnips, peeled and thoroughly pricked with fork
¼ cup salt

Drop all the ingredients in this section into blender and blend to a fine paste with ¼ cup water. Reserve in blender.

⅓ cup scraped and minced ginger root
1 tsp. powdered cinnamon
1 tsp. black peppercorns
¼ tsp. powdered cardamom
¼ tsp. powdered cloves, or 4 cloves

Preheat oven to 450° F.

2 *cups unflavoured yogurt beaten smooth with fork*
2 *lbs. lean, boneless lamb, cut into 3-inch cubes*

Rinse the turnips thoroughly and discard their soaking water. In a medium-sized oven-proof casserole, bring them to a boil in the yogurt and boil 5 minutes. Remove the turnips with a slotted spatula, rinse, and pat dry with a towel. Set aside. Reduce heat and add contents of the blender into the simmering yogurt. Stir and add the meat. Leave to simmer uncovered, stirring occasionally.

½ *cup clarified butter*
1 *cup onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices*

Meanwhile, heat the butter in a small skillet and fry onions until crisp and brown. Remove with slotted spoon and crumble into casserole of simmering meat. In the remaining butter, brown the turnips. Remove them also into meat casserole. Reserve remaining butter off heat.

2½ *Tbs. powdered coriander*

Mix coriander and red pepper together in a saucer and moisten with 3 Tbs. water. Fry this paste in the remain-

The late Maharaja of Gwalior with potentates.

ing butter over medium heat. Add 1/4 cup water whenever necessary to prevent sticking. Stir constantly with spatula until butter bubbles through and the spices move together in a solid mass when stirred. (About 1 cup water will have been added.) Stir butter and spices into the simmering meat. Bring to a boil and take off heat. Cover with aluminium foil, crimping the edges to seal tightly. Cover with lid and put in preheated oven. After 10 minutes turn off the oven. Leave the casserole thus for 8 hours without opening the oven. Reheat gently before serving.

1–2 *Tbs. ground hot red pepper*

Serve with thick brown bread.

SERVES 6

The Nepalese Potentato

(Allu ka Acchar)

In recent years, the Maharajas of Gwalior have chosen their queens from Nepal. Along with their dowries, their jewels, and their maids, these ladies brought excellent cooks. Now the kitchens of the palace are fragrant with spices unique to the food of Nepal. Mustard oil and fenugreek and the golden turmeric root, when generously blended with fresh lime juice, bring that mountain kingdom's famous potato to the dusty plains of Gwalior.

Boil the potatoes, unpeeled, until tender when pricked with a fork. Drain and set aside until cool. Peel and quarter into a medium-size serving bowl. Sprinkle with turmeric and salt. Keep in a warm place.

2 *lbs. round, white boiling potatoes (low starch)*
1 *tsp. turmeric powder*
1 *tsp. salt*

In a heavy skillet, toss the sesame seeds over medium heat until they are toast brown. Turn the blender to high, and, keeping the lid in one hand, toss in the toasted seeds and quickly cover. Blend until completely pulverized. Turn into the potato bowl. Mix together all remaining ingredients. Fold gently into the potatoes until each piece is coated.

1/2 *cup sesame seed*
1 1/2 *tsp. ground hot red pepper, mixed with*
1 1/2 *tsp. water*
2 *Tbs. scraped and finely slivered ginger*
1 *tsp. turmeric*
1 *tsp. salt*

¼ cup mustard oil, if at all possible, or vegetable oil
speck of asafoetida
3 green chili peppers, split and seeded
½ tsp. fenugreek seed

In a 12-inch wok or small (5-inch) heavy skillet, heat the oil to smoking. Keep a large lid or strainer handy. One by one toss in the spices. Cover quickly to avoid spattering. Immediately pour oil and spices over potatoes and let them sit for at least 30 minutes. Serve at room temperature.

SERVES 6

Serve with plain grilled meat and green vegetable.

The Elegant Egg
(Ande ka Acchar)

So scarce is fresh food in the higher regions of Nepal that the people there have learned to use every morsel they have. What is not eaten today must be preserved for tomorrow. And thus necessity was the mother of such Nepalese delicacies as yak blood sausages and crisp fried tripe. These eggs were also created to keep as long as possible in their spicy sauce, growing more and more flavourful as they marinate.

¾ cup unflavoured yogurt
1½ Tbs. fresh lime juice
¼–½ tsp. ground hot red pepper (to taste)
½ tsp. turmeric
½ tsp. salt
2 Tbs. minced fresh coriander leaf (cilantro), or 2 Tbs. minced parsley

At least 3 hours before serving, put all the ingredients in this section in an attractive serving bowl and beat until smooth and well blended. Set aside close to stove.

¼ cup mustard oil or vegetable oil
pinpoint of asafoetida (optional)
4 large, whole peeled garlic buds

The following operation must be performed very quickly: heat oil almost to smoking in the smallest possible skillet. Drop in asafoetida, then garlic, and lastly chilis. Immediately remove them with a slotted spoon and put into bowl of yogurt. Drop fenugreek into remaining oil. Fry until brown. Pour seeds and oil into yogurt and mix well.

2–4 *fresh, green chili peppers (about 3 inches long), seeded and left whole*
½ *tsp. fenugreek seed, or* ½ *tsp. cumin seed*

Bring 4 cups water to a rolling boil in a medium saucepan. Slip in eggs and boil for 8 minutes. Drain and rinse immediately under cold water. Peel and fold into yogurt mixture. Cook peas uncovered until they are just tender. Drain and add to yogurt and eggs. Leave to marinate at least one-half hour. Serve at room temperature.

4 *eggs*
½ *cup fresh, sweet green peas*

SERVES 2 AS ENTREE, 4 AS SIDE DISH

The Nepalese Pungent Pea
(Nepali Mattar)

Some things in Nepal take a long time to cook. There is, for example, the piece of game, cut fresh from the kill and simmered between horse and saddle until the next opportunity to stop and eat. Other things—such as the famous pungent pea—must be executed in the space of a sneeze; if not, the flavours escape all across the green steppes and over the Himalayan heights. From gardens in those heights come the green garlic used in this recipe. Tender and sweet as a spring onion, it is delicate enough to cook as a vegetable all by itself. Here it complements thé peas in a dish that is full of flavour, yet not chili hot. . . .

Prepare all ingredients and place them next to the stove. In a small wok or saucepan, heat the oil and butter to crackling. Keep the lid of the pan close by. Toss in the chilis, asafoetida, and fenugreek or caraway seed and close the lid immediately. Shake over fire for 30 seconds.

2 *Tbs. mustard oil (or vegetable oil)*
2 *Tbs. clarified butter (see note)*
2 *small whole green chilis*
1 *pinpoint of asafoetida*
1 *tsp. fenugreek seed or* 1 *Tbs. caraway seed*

Open lid and add all remaining ingredients. Cover with ½ cup water (beware of steam). Simmer uncovered until peas

2 *Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root*

3 *cups minced green garlic (or 3 cups spring onions, minced with stems)*
2½ *cups fresh or frozen green peas*
1 *tsp. salt*

SERVES 6

are just tender, 10–20 minutes depending on freshness of peas. Do not overcook.

Note: When clarified butter becomes cold, it becomes very stubborn and congeals. Mixing in mustard oil to prevent this congealing became a habit in chilly Nepal and eventually a taste that the people preferred. Thus, this recipe calls for both. Mustard oil is more often used in India for cosmetics than for cuisine. The *Ananga Ranga,* a classical text, states that "constant massage with mustard oil in which has been boiled the paste of pomegranate rind would make the breasts of a woman compact and very attractive." Another old recipe for beautiful eyes is to burn a cotton wick in mustard oil and collect the smoke on a silver spoon. An ivory slide dipped in this soot and passed along the eyes will not only beautify those dark eyes, but also strengthen them if they are weak.

Nine

Baroda

Looking at the palaces of Baroda, one might imagine that the rulers who were building them from the eighteenth century onward had come galloping with their warriors not across the ten thousand square miles of scrub brush plain that make up Baroda State but rather, straight down from Victorian London, tearing through rococo Italy, Byzantine Constantinople, and Mughal North India and grabbing the first objects that came to hand at every stage. These objects—so it would appear—were pooled after each campaign and from them was constructed yet another "Indo-Saracenic" palace. In these palaces—which were the rule rather than the exception in Princely India—marble cupids support coloured glass chandeliers in enormous halls of Ravenna tile. Furniture from Gujarat stands in curlicue splendour among paintings by Turner and Kashmiri carpets; and trifle puddings follow fiery prawn curries, in keeping with the catholic spirit.

A succession of rulers has encouraged this spirit; one even wrote a Western cookbook. But the most famous maharaja of Baroda ruled in the mid-nineteenth century. His court chronicler, Rousselet, was an eloquent Frenchman, both prudent and perceptive, with an excellent eye for the table. He recorded in detail the banquets of Baroda, with all their ritual and splendour. But he also recorded the whims of His Highness, which flavoured his cuisine with caprice. Banquets, he wrote, were unfailingly elegant —but occasionally curiously conceived. His Highness, for example was fond of certain pigeons, for whom he staged elaborate weddings:

> Two pigeons, adorned with collars and carried by pages, were brought on to the terrace roof of the palace, which had been sumptuously decorated. The King and courtiers, in gala habits, were ranged round the Brahmins, who recited the usual hymns. A considerable sum was given as a marriage portion to the two birds (which sum was, no

doubt, appropriated by the priests who had advised that the Ceremony should be performed) . Dances and a grand banquet, followed by illuminations, concluded the festival. The issue, however, was unforeseen; for a large cat, which was wandering about the palace, taking advantage of the confusion, carried off the unhappy bridegroom, leaving his bride a disconsolate widow.

There is an entire section in the royal cookbook devoted to the eating of birds. High on the list of His Majesty's favourites are recipes for the peacock, king among birds. (There is a side note, however, that the title is contested. Both peacock and parrot claim their due. The proud peacock claims that anyone who eats him is certain to become a king. But the parrot answers that those who eat him become Prime Minister and have the real power.)

The peacock is the more serious bird in Indian history, the official mount of Skanda, the war god. Of all things edible, only the peacock's elegant body is imbued with the rare and potent essences which are necessary to sustain a warlike nature and indispensable to a king. For this reason

the all-wise Emperor Asoka continued to eat peacock long after he had converted to Buddhism and forbidden any living thing to be killed in his vast kitchen. Today the peacock is a protected bird; even kings may not partake of his sacred flesh. But it is said that he who samples these sumptuous eggs summons the proud bird to dance in his mouth.

His Highness Eats Peacock Eggs

(Nauratani Kabab)

2½ Tbs. dried chick-peas
½ tsp. ground cinnamon
1 tsp. black pepper
1 Tbs. salt
6 Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root
1 Tbs. minced garlic
½ tsp. ground hot red pepper
½ cup powdered coriander
¾ cup finely minced onion
1 lb. lean ground lamb (or beef)

In a heavy, ungreased skillet, toss the chick-peas over a medium fire until they are toast brown. Pour them into a deep saucepan with all the remaining ingredients in this section. Mix well. Add 3½ cups water. Cover partially and cook over medium-low heat until all the water is absorbed and the roasted peas are crumbly. If the peas tenderize before all the water is absorbed, uncover the pot and boil off the liquid quickly.

¼ cup clarified butter
¼ cup fresh pomegranate seeds (optional)
2 Tbs. pistachio nuts, blanched and unsalted
2 Tbs. almonds, blanched and unsalted

Meanwhile, heat the butter in a small skillet and sauté the seeds and nuts until they are golden brown. Remove with a slotted spoon. Put in small bowl and crush coarsely with the back of a spoon. Reserve the butter off heat.

½ cup onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices
1 tsp. seeded and minced fresh, green chili pepper (optional)
meat of one sweet orange, membrane removed, and shredded
2 Tbs. minced fresh mint, or 2 tsp. dried mint
⅛ tsp. cumin seed
½ tsp. poppy seed
1 Tbs. firm cream cheese, crumbled

In this remaining butter, sauté the onions over medium heat until they are golden brown and very crisp. Remove. Drain and crumble into the bowl of nuts. Stir in all the remaining ingredients in this section and set aside to use as filling. Reserve the remaining butter in the skillet off heat.

When the meat is cooked, regrind it in the following manner: pour ⅓ of the reserved butter into the blender and turn it on high. Drop in 1 cup of the cooked meat. Quickly cover and blend for 30 seconds. Remove to a flat plate. Repeat twice with the remaining butter and meat. Smooth all the meat paste out on the plate to cool.

Dampen the hands. Take 2 Tbs. of the meat paste and pat it into a nest in one palm. Into the hollow of the nest, place ½ tsp. of the filling. Close the hand so that the filling disappears into the meat. Seal the opening. Pat the ball or press between the palms until it takes the shape of a clam shell. There should be no cracks.

oil or clarified butter for frying

MAKES APPROXIMATELY 16 "EGGS"

Fry these patties gently over medium-low heat in a large, lightly greased skillet. Turn only once. (About 1½ minutes per side.) Serve hot or cold as delicious, filling *hors d'oeuvres.*

The Well-Spiced Shank

(Addlay ka Korma)

- 1 *lb. lamb shanks, with bone, cut into 2-inch cubes*
- 8 *cups water*
- 1 *tsp. salt*
- 1 *tsp. turmeric*

Bring meat and water to boil in medium-sized saucepan. Skim. Add salt and turmeric and boil partially covered until meat is tender.

- 2 *tsp. poppy seed*
- 2 *Tbs. coriander seed*
- 8–16 *whole dried red chili peppers, seeded, or ½ tsp. powder (to taste)*
- 12 *blanched, unsalted almonds*
- 8 *garlic buds*
- 1 *Tbs. ginger root, scraped and chopped*
- 5 *Tbs. grated, unsweetened coconut, fresh if possible*

One by one as listed, drop all ingredients in this section into blender. Pulverize each before adding the next. Add ½ cup water and grind to a fine paste.

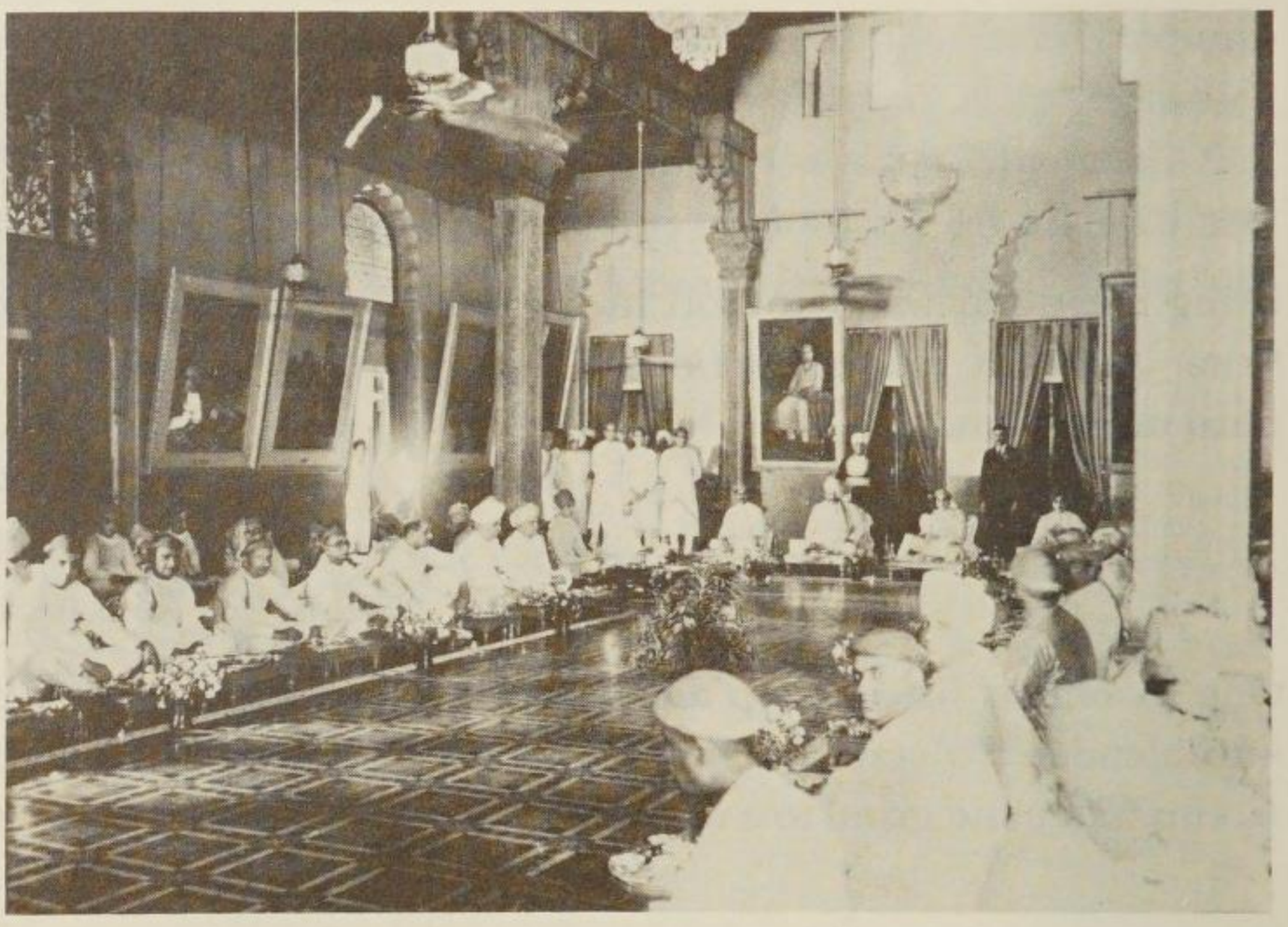
- 6 *Tbs. clarified butter*

In a heavy, medium-sized skillet, heat the butter and sauté the blender paste slowly until all its liquid has evaporated. Continue to sauté over low heat, turning constantly with a spatula, until the paste is khaki colour and free of the smell of raw spices.

- ½ *tsp. powdered cinnamon*
- ½ *tsp. powdered cardamom*
- ½ *tsp. powdered cloves*
- ¼ *cup minced fresh coriander leaf (cilantro)*

When the paste is ready, add the meat and broth and simmer slowly, uncovered, until broth is absorbed and meat is completely tender. At this point it will keep very well in a warm oven. Just before serving, sprinkle with all ingredients in this section. Stir and serve hot with chapati and a green salad or vegetable.

SERVES 4



A State Luncheon in the Baroda Palace.

Dessert for the Darkness

(Baroda Bhuran)

Baroda, Rousselet was to discover, was an unpredictable blend of old and new, East and West. Like so many other Indian states, it has remained so to the present time. The late Maharaja of Baroda—a very westernized man—even commissioned a cookbook, half Indian, half English. The followed dessert, adapted from the Indian half, is offered for consideration. It is called a Dessert for the Darkness because of a proverb that counsels, "Sweets and harlots are best at night."

2½ *cups unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with a fork*

Three hours before serving, spoon the beaten yogurt into a strainer lined with a double thickness of damp cheesecloth. Place the strainer over a bowl and leave until all the water has dripped out. Approximately 1 to 1½ cups waterless yogurt should remain.

1 *cup peeled, seeded, and cubed assorted fruits: grapes, bananas, oranges, mangoes, crisp apples, etc.*

Meanwhile chop fruits fine. Chopped fruit can be held in water mixed with lemon juice to prevent discolouring.

When the yogurt is quite dry, place it in a large bowl with the sugar. Beat with a balloon whisk or an electric egg beater until quite smooth. (It will look something like cake frosting and should have the consistency of thick mayonnaise.) If it seems too thick, add up to ¼ cup milk and beat smooth. Taste for sweetness and fold in the fruits quite thoroughly. Chill and serve in small bowls. This is best on the day it is made.

approximately ¼ cup milk
2 *Tbs. sugar*

SERVES 4 AMPLY

Central Indian Peas and Potatoes
(Allu Batla ki Bhaji)

Parboil the potatoes in salted water until they are just tender. Drain and reserve next to stove.

2 *cups potatoes, peeled and cut into bite-size chunks*
1 *tsp. salt*

Meanwhile, grind all ingredients in this section to a fine paste in the blender with ¼ cup water. Set paste aside on a plate next to the stove.

2 *tsp. scraped and minced ginger root, or ½ tsp. powdered ginger*
1 *tsp. minced garlic*
⅛ *tsp. turmeric*
2 *tsp. powdered coriander*
¼–½ *tsp. ground hot red chili powder (to taste)*

In a small skillet or saucepan, heat butter and fry all ingredients in this section until onions are just browning. Stir in reserved blender paste and continue stirring over medium heat until liquid has evaporated.

¼ *cup clarified butter*
½ *cup minced onion*
⅛ *tsp. cumin seed*
1–2 *tsp. seeded and coarsely chopped fresh, green chili pepper (to taste)*
½ *tsp. mustard seed*

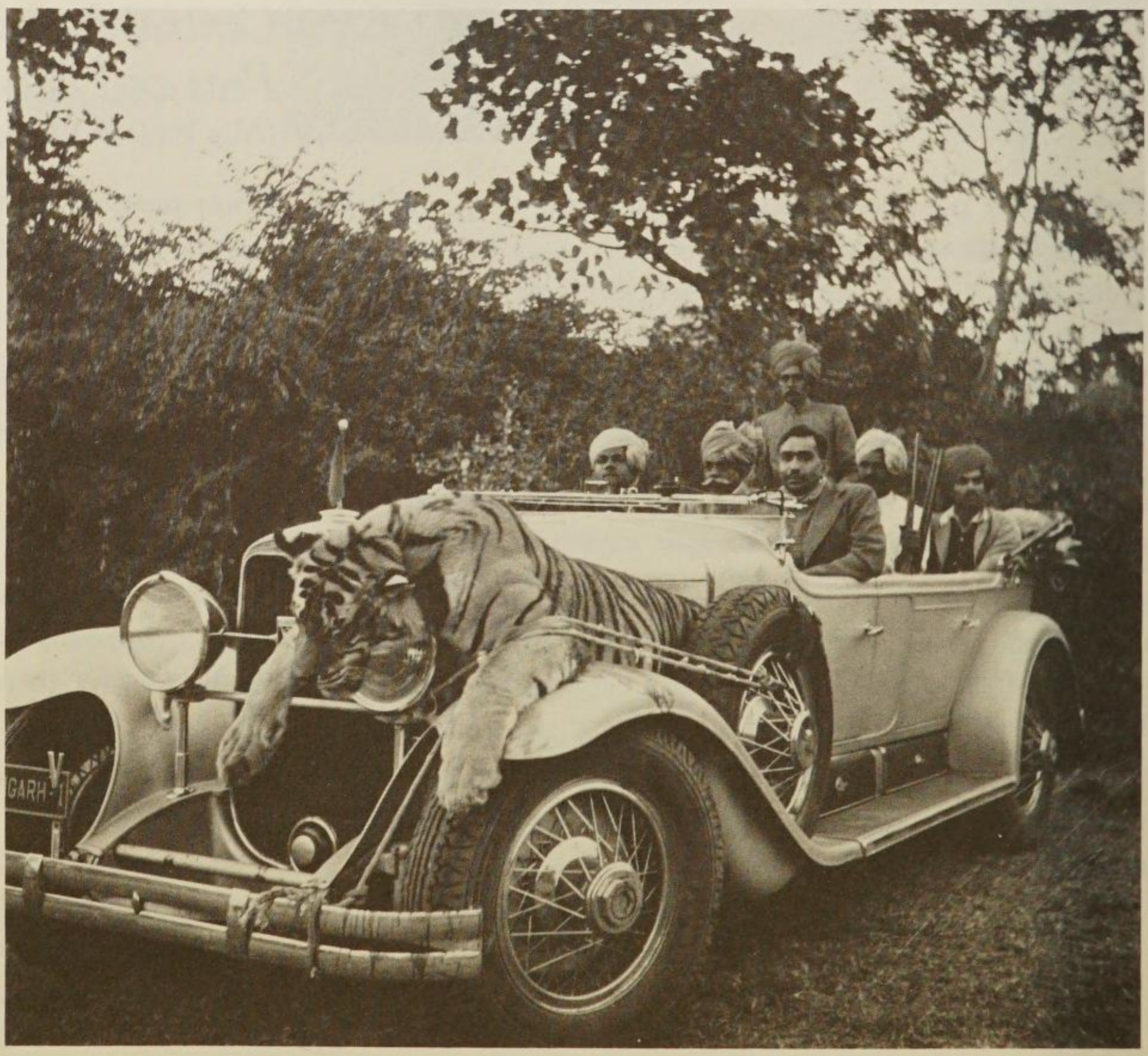
2 *cups frozen green peas (one package), not defrosted*
4 *tsp. grated, unsweetened coconut*
1 *tsp. powdered cumin*

Off heat, stir in potato pieces and all ingredients in this section. Mix thoroughly and return to heat. Cover and cook until peas are just tender.

1 *Tbs. fresh lime juice*

Just before serving, sprinkle with lime juice. Serve very hot.

SERVES 4–6



Heart
(Dil)

1 *lb. heart (approximately 4–5 lamb hearts or 1 veal heart)*

Two hours before serving, wash the hearts under cold running water; trim off any fatty covering and tubes, but leave the heart whole. Cover with cold water in a small saucepan and bring to rolling boil. Discard this water; rinse the hearts thoroughly and repeat this procedure once again.

1 *cup unpeeled garlic cloves*
1 *Tbs. powdered cumin*

Drop the garlic and cumin into the blender and add ½ cup water. Blend and scrape to a paste. Coat the blanched and rinsed hearts in this paste and leave thus unrefrigerated until they are to be cooked (minimum 1 hour).

2 *Tbs. ground sweet fennel, or 2 Tbs. whole fennel, coarsely ground in blender*

After they have marinated, rinse the hearts thoroughly. Cover with cold water in a small saucepan; add the fennel and again bring to a boil. Then reduce the heat and simmer uncovered for 10 minutes. Discard the water; rinse the hearts and slice as thinly as possible with a sharp knife.

Preheat oven to warm (200°).

⅓ *cup clarified butter*
2 *cups onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices*
½ *tsp. salt*
½ *tsp. powdered cardamom*

Heat the butter in a medium-sized casserole and fry the onions until brown but not crisp. Stir in the slices of heart, salt, and cardamom. Cover and leave in a warm oven for 15–20 minutes.

SERVES 2–3

Serve with rice.

Fried Chicken for After the Hunt
(Shikari Murgi)

Soon after his first presentation at court, Rousselet became a fast friend of the maharaja and was invited on a great antelope hunt in the royal preserve:

By evening we had taken several superb bucks. The King then gave the signal to return, and set off at a gallop. When

we arrived at our rendezvous, we found the party commanded by Bhao [Bhao Sahib, the maharaja's favourite]. Tents were pitched in a beautiful glade surrounded by fine trees, and a sumptuous repast awaited us. The spectacle was most animated. The court servants passed to and fro burdened with great dishes; the attendants dismembered the game and placed it on camels; elephants arrived from Baroda with torchbearers to show us the way; and the last rays of the sun gilded the scene, and lighted up the groups of courtiers, soldiers and horses.

And so Rousselet fades into the sunset; well fed and no doubt content, having sampled of such excellent outdoor cuisine as this simple and delicious chicken.

2 *cups unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with a fork*
2 *Tbs. grated onion*
2 *tsp. scraped and grated ginger root*
1 *tsp. salt*
½ *tsp. turmeric*
1–2 *tsp. ground hot red pepper (to taste)*
2 *lbs. chicken pieces, ready for frying*

At least three hours before cooking, mix together all ingredients. Rub them well over chicken. Put these chicken pieces in a colander or large strainer and set over a large bowl to drain. Leave to marinate as long as possible.

vegetable oil for deep frying
salt

Returning from the hunt, heat oil almost to smoking. It should fill about half of a pot large enough to accommodate all the chicken pieces. One by one, drop in the pieces. Each piece should be able to move freely in the pot. Do two lots if necessary. Time exactly 5 minutes from when the last piece is added, then remove all the pieces with a slotted spoon or tongs. They will be crisp and tender. Drain on paper towelling. Sprinkle with salt and serve immediately.

SERVES 4–6

Ten

Indore

My husband has known Indore since his birth, when it was still an independent, sovereign Central Indian state and still maintained a full complement of staff. When I arrived in 1966, Indore, like all the former Princely States, was maintaining a memory. The memory was still very fresh; but the scale of living was much reduced. Our wedding revived something of the former pomp and splendour and many of the memories. Kitchen staff who had long since found employment outside the palace returned briefly to lend a hand and, for a moment, it was again the "good old days."

Our Goanese cooks found themselves assisted once again by their cutters and choppers and bakers. Though the old Swiss cook did not come out of his retirement, his fellows in the Western kitchens did full credit to Indore's reputation for excellent French cuisine. In the Indian kitchens, which are separated from the main palace, Dulji was once again a chef. As Senior Indian cook, he had charge of thirty assistants, specially recruited for the wedding. Together we surveyed the activities that precede an Indian banquet, activities so familiar to him and so fascinatingly new to me. In the courtyard of the Indian kitchens, supple women winnowed rice, legumes, and wheat until each grain lay sweet and clean in the basket. Boys hurried back and forth carrying small shovels full of coal from one cooking brazier to the next. Others cut vegetables, peeled garlic and onions, and checked the yogurt that was setting in huge jars.

The Indian kitchen officer bustled from one to the other carefully noting down the sugar, flour, or oil he dispensed to each assistant. In one corner, two young men moved rhythmically, grinding the spicy *masala* pastes and chutneys that were brought to them one after the other. Both squatted comfortably on a small wooden board just large enough to accommodate their feet. Before each was a smooth, rectangular grinding stone that sloped gently away from their feet. Up and down its length they each worked a small stone

The late Maharaja of Indore.

cylinder, stopping now and then to regather the spices and moisten them for a finer grind.

One minute Dulji would be completely aloof, surveying his busy domain. The next minute he was in the midst of the fray, adding salt, berating sloth, stirring pots with a critical eye. Some dishes had been simmering since the early morning hours, when Dulji had lighted the first fire, offering it, as always, a little clarified butter and worshipping the sacred flame that consumed it. This is a ritual that many Hindu homes observe, for the hearth and the fire are holy.

Dulji could look back over almost sixty years of performing that ritual in the very same kitchen. When he began to reminisce about these years I loved to be there. He would look at me and look away into days I could not even imagine, then he would begin, very gently, a story such as the one that follows.

It was a custom at banquets in Indore, as in many

Princely States, to decorate the guests' tables, which were low eating platforms, with designs made of coloured rice flour. All manner of auspicious blessings and good wishes were worked into these designs. In short, they were a banquet must—especially if His Highness was to be present at the meal. One nobleman, however, found to his horror that the cupboard was bare of rice flour; and the maharaja was to arrive within the hour for a banquet given in his honour! Without hesitation, the host gave an order and the table was ready on time, decorated with very elaborate designs, executed in the noblest of flours—pure, snowy-white, ground pearls!

Curiously enough in the Princely States, extravagances such as that went hand in hand with great simplicity. Many maharajas began life in the seventeenth century as generals of the Mughal Emperor and were essentially simple fighting men. They sometimes ate nothing more than balls of wheat flour, water, salt, and butter cooked in the campfire coals. The taste for such simple things lingered long after the need had vanished with successive generations. So, with the ground pearls, His Highness would have been delighted to have the unsophisticated corn dish that follows. Like him, you will eat it with undisguised relish, over and over again.

Camp Corn
(Kees)

6–8 *ears fresh, sweet corn*

about 3 Tbs. vegetable oil
½ *tsp. mustard seed, yellow or black*
1 *tsp. cumin seed*
1–3 *tsp. seeded and minced fresh, green chili peppers (to taste)*
½ *tsp. salt*

Hold a large grater over a bowl and grate the corn directly off the ears into the bowl, making about 2½ cups. Set aside.

Cover the bottom of a medium-sized skillet with a thin coating of oil. Heat almost to smoking. Tip pan and drop mustard, cumin, and chilis into collected oil. (Beware of spattering.) Reduce heat to medium and stir in corn. Continue stirring for 5 minutes.

½ *cup grated, unsweetened coconut*
½ *cup unflavoured yogurt or milk*
½ *tsp. black pepper, coarsely ground*
1½ *tsp. powdered cumin*

Add all ingredients in this section and continue stirring until all the liquid is completely absorbed (should be consistency of dry scrambled eggs). Cover and cook over lowest possible heat for 2 minutes. Taste for salt. The corn can now be held off heat for several hours, covered.

2 *tsp. sugar or wedges of fresh lime*

SERVES 4

Just before serving, heat through. According to taste, add sugar to sweeten or lime juice to balance the chili and enhance the flavours. Serve hot.

Vegetarian Pullao
(Subzi ka Pullao)

Indore's kitchens, like those of almost every other royal kitchen in India, were divided into two basic parts. Vegetarian cooks cooked only vegetarian food and were most often Brahmins of high birth. The meat cooks were altogether separate; they could not so much as pass through the rarified regions of their highborn fellows, because of their daily contact with meat. Strange to say, however, a good deal of time was spent in trying to disguise vegetables as meat. Ladies of the court to whom meat was forbidden because of widowhood or religious restrictions would pester their cooks for the one thing they craved—the taste and the texture of meat. Ever resourceful, these vegetarian cooks devised dishes to satisfy those demanding palates. This pullao, one such achievement, goes beyond mere satisfaction; it is an exquisite meal in itself. If you wish to serve something with it, make a light entree or the faculties will be overwhelmed. To enjoy the fragrance as well as taste and texture of the pullao, open it at the table.

First prepare all ingredients and measure onto plates to facilitate cooking. Stock, rice, and vegetables can cook simultaneously.

Tie all ingedients in this section securely in a double thickness of cheesecloth. Using any heavy kitchen utensil, beat this cloth bag gently to bruise the contents. Place it in a small saucepan. Cover with 4½ cups water and boil partially covered for one-half hour. Off heat, remove the bag. Cool and squeeze all of its liquid into the saucepan. Discard contents of bag.

STOCK

¼–½ *cup whole dried red chili peppers (to taste)*
1½ *Tbs. anise seed*
2 *Tbs. coriander seed*
3 *large bay leaves*
1 *tsp. minced garlic*
½ *tsp. scraped and minced ginger root*
¼ *cup coarsely chopped onion*

Return saucepan to heat. Add peas and simmer uncovered until they are almost tender. Adding water if necessary, adjust broth to 4 cups. Set aside off heat.

¼ *cup fresh or frozen green peas*

Meanwhile, wash the rice until the water runs clear and set to drain in strainer. In a large, oven-proof casserole, heat butter over medium-high heat. One by one toss in the onion, cloves, cinnamon, and cumin, stirring between each addition. Fry for 5 minutes. Add the coriander, yogurt, and garlic and stir until all liquid is absorbed. Add the rice and continue stirring until it is light khaki in colour.

RICE

4 *cups white, long-grain rice (not precooked)*
¼ *cup clarified butter*
½ *cup evenly chopped onions*
6 *cloves*
6 *inches of cinnamon stick*
¼ *tsp. black cumin seed or caraway seed*
1 *Tbs. powdered coriander*
1 *Tbs. unflavoured yogurt*
½ *tsp. minced garlic*

Add salt, milk, bay leaves, and the reserved broth with peas. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium. Cover and cook until half the thickness of the rice grain will rub off between the fingers. If absolutely necessary to stir, use a fork. Reserve, covered, off heat.

1 *Tbs. salt*
¼ *cup whole milk*
3 *large bay leaves*

At this point, begin to preheat the oven if you are going to prepare and serve the dish without interruption (see below).

VEGETABLES

1/3 cup coarsely chopped onion
3 tsp. minced garlic
2 tsp. scraped and minced ginger root, or 1/4 tsp. powdered ginger

Purée onion, garlic, and ginger in blender with 1/4 cup water. (Or pound to a smooth paste in a mortar.) Set aside near the stove.

1 cup cubed potato
1 cup cubed carrots
1 cup cubed turnips
1 cup cauliflower cut into flowerets
1/4 cup clarified butter

In a small, deep saucepan, heat butter over medium heat. Deep-fry vegetables, one variety at a time, until golden. Remove to paper towels with slotted spoon. Set aside.

1 tsp. ground hot red pepper
1/2 cup unflavoured yogurt
2 Tbs. unsweetened, condensed milk
1/4 tsp. powdered cardamom
2 Tbs. crushed pistachios
1 Tbs. seedless raisins
1 1/2 tsp. salt

Tip pan and collect the remaining butter; sauté the reserved blender paste for 5 minutes. Turn heat to medium high and add all ingredients in this section, one by one, stirring constantly. Continue to cook until the sauce is rich and moist, but not runny. Off heat, stir in reserved fried vegetables. Set aside.

When the rice is ready, remove half of it to a plate. Over the remaining half, spread the vegetables and sauce. Replace the removed half of the rice, sprinkling it gently over the vegetables. At this point, the dish can be held for several hours.

One half hour before serving, preheat oven to 300° F., and complete preparation. Crumble the saffron threads and muddle them in 1 Tbs. hot water. Mix with rosewater, milk, butter, and pistachios and pour down the sides of the casserole.

FINAL PREPARATION

¼ tsp. saffron threads
¼ cup rose-water
1 cup whole milk
¼ cup clarified butter
¼ cup crushed pistachios

Cover the casserole with a double thickness of heavy duty aluminium foil, crimping the edges to seal. Top with the lid and place in center of preheated oven for 20 minutes.

Open the casserole at the table.

SERVES 6–8

Early Morning Eggs
(Andee ki Chutney)

In India the climate is such that the body feels lively in the morning, pleasantly lethargic in the afternoon, and lively again towards twilight. The routine of the palace would follow the same rhythm—shooting in the morning, holding court in the afternoon, reveling in the evening. Standard fare after a morning in the outdoors were these spicy and satisfying eggs, prepared by attendants over a makeshift fire while the tiger was brought up for skinning.

Her Highness breakfasting out of doors.

3 *Tbs. clarified butter*
1 *cup evenly chopped onions*

Heat the butter in a small skillet. Tip it into one side of the skillet and fry onions until golden and just crisping. Set aside off heat.

½ *tsp. cumin*
¼ *tsp. turmeric*
¼–½ *tsp. ground hot red pepper (to taste)*
¼ *tsp. black pepper, coarsely ground*
4 *large eggs*

Beat together all ingredients in this section and pour into the skillet. Return to low heat and stir until the eggs are set to taste.

½ *tsp. seeded and minced fresh, green chili pepper (optional)*
1 *Tbs. minced coriander leaf (cilantro), or* 1 *Tbs. minced parsley*

Garnish the eggs with chili and coriander and serve immediately. Excellent with chapati (see page 99).

SERVES 4

Cobra Cooler
(Harira)

The serpent Cobra is sacred to the Hindus. The symbol of eternity, he lies coiled with his tail in his mouth. Some believe Cobra himself is immortal because he can create a new skin for himself; others believe that his form is eternal because it adorns two deities, Shiva and Vishnu.

Accordingly—as the snake is sacred—he must be given food on certain holy days. Nagapanchmi in July or August is a day set aside for him. It is meritorious on this day to feed cobras everywhere with an offering of milk in a bowl.

Usually there is a bit of this milk left over in the pantry after feeding the snakes. Always the day is hot, so almonds and spices will be mixed with the left-over milk and made into a cooling liquid. This refreshing drink has the flavor of spring and the freshness of the first monsoon.

15 *peppercorns*
3 *Tbs. granulated sugar*
seeds of 3 cardamom pods

Drop the peppercorns into the blender and powder them. Then add all the ingredients in this section and grind very fine with 1 cup water.

½ cup large seedless raisins
⅓ cup blanched, unsalted almonds

Add the milk and grind at high speed for 1 minute. Taste for sweetness and add up to 1 Tbs. sugar as necessary. Strain through fine muslin or several thicknesses of dampened cheesecloth and chill before drinking.

2 cups whole milk

In the cold season, butter is heated with cardamom seeds until their fragrance is emitted and then added to the drink just before serving.

1 Tbs. clarified butter
seeds of 2 cardamom pods

SERVES 2

Spicy Side Dish
(Jam ki Lonji)

Another quick, easy dish, these guavas or pears are served as a side dish—something a little bit pungent and tart to accompany a simple, roast meat.

Peel the fruit and cut each lengthwise into eight slices. Discard seeds and pulpy centers. In a small skillet, heat the butter to crackling. Drop in spices one at a time in order given. Shake each once over fire before adding next. Stir in fruit slices. Toss over high heat until just beginning to turn colour.

Stir in all remaining ingredients. Heat through and serve immediately.

4 firm guavas or unripe pears
1 Tbs. clarified butter or vegetable oil
pinch asafoetida (optional)
¼ tsp. black mustard seed
¼ tsp. cumin seed
1 fresh, green chili pepper, seeded and minced
¼ tsp. salt
2 Tbs. unflavoured yogurt
¼ tsp. black pepper
½ tsp. powdered cumin

SERVES 4

A Western-style state banquet in the Indore Palace.

Chicken for Chickens

(Murgi Survedar)

Every state had certain retainers who were privileged beyond their rank. In Indore, there was an old warrior who forsook the battlefield for the kitchen. The rest of his colleagues used to tease him with this saying, which is well known in Central India: "I am the man for eating and for drinking—but for fighting, here is my humpbacked brother." Still, everyone competed to sample his cuisine—especially this famous chicken, with its gravy of coconut milk, and no chilis!

I/3/76

Drop garlic, ginger, and oil into blender and purée. Pour this purée into a heavy, medium-sized pot and sauté over medium heat for 5 minutes. Add all remaining ingredients in this section. Stir to mix well. Raise heat and continue frying until chicken is golden and all natural liquid is evaporated. Add 3 cups water. Cover and simmer until just tender. Remove chicken and nuts, drain, and reserve. Strain broth, reduce to 1 cup, and reserve separately.

2 tsp. minced garlic
1 Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root, or 1/4 tsp. powdered ginger
1 Tbs. vegetable oil
1 1/2 lbs. meaty chicken pieces
2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. turmeric
8 unsalted cashews
8 blanched, unsalted almonds

Osbrze Log t life - hot full

One by one as listed, drop all ingredients in this section into blender. Pulverize each before adding the next. Add 1/4 cup water and blend to a smooth, thick paste. Set aside next to stove.

1 Tbs. poppy seed
4 cloves
1 1/4 inches of cinnamon stick, or 1/4 tsp. powdered cinnamon
seeds of 4 cardamom pods, or 1/4 tsp. powdered cardamom
1/2 tsp. peppercorns
2 tsp. scraped and minced ginger root, or 1/2 tsp. powdered ginger
8 garlic buds
2 1/2 Tbs. minced onion

In a heavy, medium-sized saucepan, heat the butter and fry onions until they are just turning colour. Off heat, stir in the blender mixture. Return to heat and continue frying, scraping and turning with spatula. Add 1 Tbs. water whenever necessary to prevent sticking. Continue thus until butter bubbles up to the top of the spicy paste and it moves as a single mass when stirred.

6 Tbs. clarified butter
1/3 cup coarsely and evenly chopped onion

I did 1/2 hr. still did not match description! she shd. give time estimate

¼ *cup unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with fork*
1 *cup thick coconut milk*
2 *Tbs. fresh coriander leaf (cilantro) (optional)*

SERVES 4

Off heat, add the drained chicken and nuts. Stir and add the yogurt. Return to medium heat. When yogurt is absorbed, add the broth, spoon by spoon, and finally the coconut milk. Stir constantly until chicken is tender and enveloped in rich, golden sauce. Serve hot over rice. Garnish with coriander leaf just before serving.

Keeps well in refrigerator.

Green Chili Preserves
(Mirchi ka Acchar)

"Try a chilly with it, Miss Sharp," said Joseph, really interested. "A chilly?", said Rebecca gasping. "Oh, yes! . . . How fresh and green they look," she said, and put one into her mouth. It was hotter than the curry; flesh and blood could bear it no longer.

—William Makepeace Thackeray,
Vanity Fair

Tut, tut, Rebecca! How very imprudent to bite into a whole green chili! There are those who will do it, of course, but the majority prefer this pungent, delicious preserve. It has all the flavour, little of the bite, and gets better the longer it keeps.

25 *fresh, unblemished green chili peppers (each at least 3 inches long)*

At least 1 week before serving, slit all chilis open on one side. (Take great care when handling these chilis. Their seeds emit fumes which burn the eyes.) Set aside half of them without seeding. Seed the remaining half and cut them into 1½-inch pieces. Discard the seeds.

5½ *Tbs. mustard seed, yellow or black*
1 *tsp. powdered cumin*
2 *Tbs. salt*
2 *pinpoints asafoetida*

Pulverize mustard seed in blender. Mix together with all remaining ingredients in this section. Divide this mixture in half. Using the fingers or a small spoon, stuff each whole chili with ¼ tsp. of the spice mixture. Put them in a glass or crockery jar just large enough to hold them. Cover tightly and leave in a dark, cool place for 2 days.

In a second small jar, put the remaining spice mixture and the cut chilis. Cover tightly. Shake until the chilis are com-

pletely coated with spices. Leave in a dark, cool place for 2 days.

After 2 days, open the jars. Add 3 Tbs. lime juice to the whole chilis. Cover. Shake to mix and return to a dark, cool place for 3 days. Add the remaining 3 Tbs. lime juice to the cut chilis. Fill their jar with sesame oil so that the chilis are completely covered with oil. Seal tightly. Return to dark, cool place for at least 3 days.

Should any mould appear, skim it off. Add 1 Tbs. more salt and be sure that the cut chilis are always completely covered with oil. These chilis should keep indefinitely. They are a delicious accompaniment to meats, vegetables, or rice. The whole chilis will be hotter than the cut ones.

6 Tbs. fresh lime juice
sesame oil or vegetable oil

MAKES 2 JARS OF PRESERVES

Eleven

Hyderabad

A casual eye cast about Hyderabad state would immediately comprehend its great size; but its wealth, also renowned the world over, would be difficult to detect. The size of the state impresses easily: Hyderabad was the largest state in India, as large as the whole of Greece. The wealth, however, was less obvious; it had its source underground, in the famous mines of Golconda. These mines have furnished many of the world's finest jewels and, at the same time, made the ruling family of Hyderabad one of the richest in India. Still they occupy only a small part of a state that is largely bleak and austere.

Only when one reaches the capital of Hyderabad is this bleak horizon slightly broken. There generations of construction-conscious nobles have erected enormous palaces and public buildings in the shadow of the rocky Banjara hills and the ruined hill fort of Golconda.

Golconda, the remains of a former kingdom, which also ruled the Deccan Plateau, lays claim to great antiquity, many diamonds, and, now, a white wine. But the present ruling family of Hyderabad claims its descent from the Prophet Mohammed. Titular heads of both a powerful state and a brilliant social life, the members of this family have remained apart from their subjects, the majority of whom are Hindus, and have married Turkish princesses or the daughters of their Muslim noblemen.

Hyderabad state has always had the most of everything: harems, jewels, cars, square miles, palaces, and public buildings. It claims the only hospital in India devoted to the medicinal use of precious stones and minerals. And it claims—with Lucknow, a former Princely State, lapsed by the British—the most opulent, sumptuous and delicious Muslim cuisine in the subcontinent.

Its bazaars ring from morning to evening with the sound of hammers pounding silver. Small nuggets of pure silver are beaten thin as muslin and sold by weight, to serve as garnish for almond confections or mountains of snow-

white rice. In side streets, deep in shadow, sit the pearl merchants, perfectly balanced on their profit-earned paunches. They dominate the world of pearls in India. Their speciality is the art of piercing pearls. But now and again their little silver scales weigh out a portion of finest pearls to fortify a noble meal.

Far away, by the food bazaar, a street vender sells *halim,* Hyderabad's breakfast specialty of wheat simmered with innards, feet, and tripe. It cooks for hours and is gone in minutes, always in demand with early-morning shoppers, hurrying home before the sun is high. As midday approaches, the shadow of the great four-towered Char Minar gate shortens and finally disappears. Everything is hot and still. Betel leaf venders sprinkle water on their leaves and cover their own heads. The great public buildings, always impressive, become unreal in the flat light; and their flags hang limp, completely hiding the curious state emblem they bear. According to legend, this emblem, and all the glory it symbolizes, had its origin in a little loaf of bread and one extraordinary man. The man was Asaf Jha, founder of Hyderabad, and the legend is as follows:

Many, many years ago, the very first Nizam of Hyderabad set out from the court of the Mughal Emperors in Delhi to return to his own kingdom in the south. Weary and hungry, he stopped by the road to rest for the night. An old holy man, sitting close by in his humble house, called to the royal traveller. "Though it is only bread and water," he said, "you are welcome to share my food with me."

So much did the Nizam enjoy the old man's company and the simple bread he was offered that, before he knew it, he had eaten four of those round, dimpled loaves—which were called *kulchas.* He looked guiltily at his host, but the old man said, "Eat your fill; there is more." And so the Nizam ate until he had finished seven loaves and could eat no more. When he rose to thank his host, the old saintly man only said quietly, "Go now, my son, and may the blessings of Allah be upon you. You have eaten seven of my

simple *kulchas;* your line shall rule for seven generations."

And so it was. The *kulcha* became the emblem of the rulers of Hyderabad, emblazoned upon their standard and flying proudly over the Nizam's majestic palace . . . for exactly seven generations. After that, the Nizams no longer ruled Hyderabad; but the *kulcha* exists still, sometimes transformed into an intricate confection and interworked with thin layers of pure silver, and sometimes simple—as in this recipe—like the Nizam's very first *kulcha.*

Seven Dynasty Dessert

(Badam ke Kulche)

1 *cup sifted all-purpose flour*
1 *cup blanched, unsalted almonds*

In a heavy, ungreased skillet or saucepan heat the flour, stirring constantly, until it becomes fragrant and khaki coloured. Do not let it brown. Set aside. Repeat the process with the almonds until they are thoroughly dry but not brown. Pulverize in the blender without adding any liquid. Sift and blend again until the almonds are like coarse flour.

3 *Tbs. rose-water*

Remove the almond flour to a plate. Pour rose-water over it and knead briefly. Set aside.

Preheat oven to 300° F. Place in it a roasting pan half full of water.

¾ *cup powdered sugar*
1 *Tbs. rose-water*
3 *egg whites, beaten until stiff but not dry*

Using the same ungreased skillet, heat the rose-water and sugar together. Stir constantly until the sugar is dissolved. Stir in the roasted flour and moistened almond flour. Add 1 Tbs. of the beaten egg white and mix in thoroughly. Carefully fold in the remaining egg white. Remove from heat. Gently divide this dough into 30 balls about the size of a walnut shell. Space one-half inch apart on an ungreased cookie tin. With the index finger, make a small dimple in the center of each ball (for the sake of tradition). Place the cookie tin on top of the roasting pan in the oven. Bake for about 20 minutes or until the *kulchas* puff slightly but do not brown.

If served immediately, the *kulchas* will be at their most delicate and fragrant (they can be prepared ahead of time and baked at the last minute).

MAKES 30 *KULCHAS*

Edible Edifice
(Dahi Pullao)

Hyderabad is ruled by a Muslim dynasty—hence the Muslim title "nizam," rather than the Hindu "maharaja." There are many Hindus in the kingdom, however, for its borders encompass vast territories. Just on the edges of the northeast border, lies a famous Hindu temple, Elura, a truly noble monument to artistry and patience. The last of several generations of architects to supervise the centuries of work on the temple left an inscription on a cornerstone. His words describe the same elation and pride you will feel upon completing this magnificent pullao:

"Wonderful! O how could I ever have done it!"

6 cups unflavoured yogurt

At least 3 hours before cooking, pour the yogurt into a large strainer lined with a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth and set over a bowl to drip. (Two cups water-less yogurt will be required.)

BROTH

1 lb. chicken pieces for stock (backs, necks, et cetera)
½ cup onion, coarsely chopped but unpeeled
2 Tbs. scraped and chopped ginger root
2 Tbs. unpeeled garlic buds
seeds of 8 cardamom pods, or 1 tsp. powdered cardamom
4–6 whole dried red chili pods (at least 2 inches long) (to taste)

Meanwhile, tie all ingredients in this section in a large, double-thick square of cheesecloth. Secure ends so that nothing can escape. Place this bag in a large, heavy pot. Cover with 3 quarts water and bring to a boil. Skim and continue to boil gently, partially covered, for 35 minutes. Remove cheesecloth bag. Cool and squeeze all its liquid into the broth, pressing strongly. Discard contents of bag. Correct broth to 5 cups and set aside off heat.

15 *cloves*
2 *large bay leaves*
3 *inches of cinnamon stick*
1 *tsp. cumin seed*
1 *Tbs. powdered coriander*
1 *Tbs. salt*

SAUCE AND CHICKEN

seeds of 8 *cardamom pods, or* 1 *tsp. powdered cardamom*
2½ *Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root, or* 2 *tsp. powdered ginger*
4 *tsp. minced garlic*
1 *cup evenly chopped onion*
3–5 *tsp. ground hot red chili pepper (to taste)*
4 *tsp. salt*

One by one as listed, drop all ingredients in this section into the blender. Pulverize each before adding the next. Add ½ cup water and reduce the whole to a smooth paste. Put this paste on a plate by the stove.

1 *cup clarified butter*
3 *cups onion, cut in half from top to root, and across grain in thin, even slices*
4 *lbs. chicken or partridge pieces*
½ *tsp. saffron threads*
2 *Tbs. fresh lime juice*

In a large, heavy skillet, heat the butter and sauté onions until they are just turning colour. Stir in the blender paste and continue to sauté over medium heat for 5 minutes. Fold in chicken pieces and continue to sauté gently for 15 minutes. Add ½ cup water. Cover and cook over medium heat until chicken is completely tender. Powder the saffron threads in a cup. Muddle them in the lime juice and stir into the chicken. Set aside off heat.

Preheat oven to 300° F. if you plan to prepare and serve the dish without interruption (see below).

RICE

⅔ cup clarified butter

In a large, heavy, oven-proof casserole that can be tightly lidded, heat the butter until it crackles. Gently stir in the

rice and continue stirring over medium heat until the grains are khaki colour. Meanwhile, heat together the 5 cups reserved broth and the milk. When the rice is ready, pour in the heated liquids (beware of steam). Raise heat and boil uncovered for 10 minutes without stirring. Cover and set aside off heat.

5 cups white, long-grain rice (not precooked)
3 cups milk

Crumble saffron into a cup. Muddle it in 1 Tbs. hot water and stir into the reserved 2 cups waterless yogurt. Pulverize the almonds in the blender and stir them into the yogurt also.

FILLING
½ tsp. saffron
4 Tbs. chopped blanched, unsalted almonds

At this point the various components of the pullao may be held for several hours. One hour before serving, preheat oven to 300° F., and complete preparation.

Spread a 2-foot length of heavy-duty foil next to the rice casserole. Remove two-thirds of the rice onto this foil. Pour melted butter over the remaining rice. Cover with half the reserved chicken and sauce. Sprinkle half the remaining rice over the chicken. Top this with the remaining chicken and sauce, mixed with half the reserved yogurt filling. Sprinkle in the remaining rice. Do not pack. Top with the remaining yogurt filling. Mix together the rose-water, milk, and cream. Pour gently down all sides of the casserole. Quickly bring to a boil. Cover casserole with the foil, crimping edges to seal. Put lid firmly in place and transfer to preheated oven. Bake for 25 minutes. Open casserole at the table.

ASSEMBLY
2 Tbs. butter, melted
2½ cups milk
2 Tbs. rose-water
¼ cup whipping cream

Serve with a light salad or vegetable.

SERVES 8–10

Tomatoes Ali Pasha
(Tamatar ki Kaat)

Hyderabad has long been the largest and wealthiest of the Indian states. Her noblemen—not to speak of the Nizam himself—lived on a scale that exceeded that of European monarchs. Yet if these noblemen wished to leave Hyderabad—say, for a weekend in a neighbouring

kingdom—they were required to submit complicated petitions to the Nizam, petitions that were frequently rejected. As a result, many of the noblemen turned to domestic pursuits—conspiracies, concubines, even cookery. This recipe came from one such noble cook, Ali Pasha, Nawab of Hyderabad. The premier nobleman of the entire kingdom, he has brought tomato purée to perfection.

2 *Tbs. dried tamarind pulp*

In a small saucepan, bring 1 cup water to a rolling boil. Remove from heat, add the tamarind pulp, and leave to soak for 15 minutes.

½ *tsp. minced garlic*
1 *tsp. scraped and minced ginger root, or* ¼ *tsp. powdered ginger*
½ *tsp. ground hot red pepper*
½ *tsp. salt*
1 *lb. ripe tomatoes (preferably tinned, peeled tomatoes)*

Remove tamarind pulp from water with slotted spoon. Squeeze all its juices into the water and discard pulp. Add all ingredients in this section. Simmer over a low heat until tomatoes have begun to dissolve.

1 *Tbs. chick-pea flour, or all-purpose flour*
½ *tsp. powdered coriander*
2 *tsp. poppy seed*
2 *Tbs. dried, unsweetened coconut*
1½ *tsp. powdered cumin*
½ *Tbs. dark brown sugar*

Toast the flour in a small, ungreased skillet. Stir constantly until it is khaki colour and fragrant. Add to tomatoes. Add all remaining ingredients in this section and reduce to a thick purée over low heat. Reserve off heat.

3 *Tbs. sesame or vegetable oil*
3 *peeled, whole garlic buds*
⅛ *tsp. mustard seed, black or yellow*

In a very small saucepan, heat oil almost to smoking. Keep a lid close by. Tip pan and drop in garlic. A few seconds later, drop in mustard seed. Just as garlic is beginning to brown, drop in chilis and bay leaves. Cover the pan immediately. Remove from heat. Stir these spices and oil into reserved purée. Cover immediately. Heat

through just before serving. It will keep for several hours off heat.

Serve as side dish with rice or chapati.

2 *whole, dried red chili peppers, seeded (at least 2 inches long)*
2 *bay leaves*

SERVES 4

The late Maharaja Gunga Singh of Bikaner celebrating his fiftieth year of rule.

Founders' Feast
(Kaliya Asaf Jha)

The founder of the dynasty, the first of the seven Nizams to rule Hyderabad, was Asaf Jha, for whom this dish is named. A famous general before he became a ruler, Asaf Jha used to say to his men that to hold a fort there must be only a head, two arms, and two legs. By that, he meant a commander, reinforcement from two quarters (the arms), and food and water in the fort (the legs). Food in the fort may have meant rice and lentils for the regiments; but for Asaf Jha himself, there were always elaborate dishes. This *kaliya,* or saucy meat, was one of his favourites.

Rich with saffron, almonds, and raisins, it is the epitome of refined Muslim cuisine.

3 cups unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with a fork

Three hours before cooking, pour the yogurt into a strainer lined with a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth and set over a bowl to drip. (One cup of waterless yogurt will be required.)

2 Tbs. minced garlic
¼ cup scraped and minced ginger root
½ cup clarified butter
4 tsp. salt
2 lbs. lean, boneless lamb (preferably shoulder or leg), cut into 2-inch cubes

Purée the garlic, ginger, and salt with ¼ cup water in the blender. Rub this purée into the meat. In a heavy, medium-sized saucepan, heat the butter and fry the meat until it is golden and the natural water evaporated. Add 2 cups water and cook uncovered over medium-high heat until tender. (Add up to 1 cup more water as necessary to tenderize.) All the water should boil off before beginning the next step. Set aside off heat when ready.

¼ cup clarified butter or vegetable oil
2 Tbs. seedless raisins
½ cup slivered blanched, unsalted almonds
1 cup coarsely chopped onion
1–2 Tbs. ground hot red pepper
2 tsp. sugar
2–4 fresh, green chili peppers, seeded and minced (optional)

Fifteen minutes before serving, in a very small skillet or saucepan, heat the butter and fry the raisins until they puff. Remove to the meat pot. In the remaining oil, fry almonds until golden. Remove to meat pot. Add enough fresh oil to the skillet to cover the onions and fry them until they are golden and crisp. Drain and add into the meat with all remaining ingredients in this section.

At this point, the meat can be held for several hours. Twenty minutes before serving, reheat it gently and complete preparation.

½ tsp. saffron threads
¼ cup minced fresh coriander leaf (cilantro) (optional)

Powder the saffron and put to soak in a cup with 2 tsp. hot water. Just before serving, beat this saffron water into the 1 cup reserved waterless yogurt. Stir into the meat with the coriander leaf. Beat through and serve immediately over plain, white rice.

SERVES 6

Hyderabad's Most Acclaimed Curry
(Do Pyaza)

Because of its fabulous size and wealth, Hyderabad has always been more than a kingdom; it is a way of life—the true inspiration for the splendid Oriental fable. Visitors would fall speechless in the face of its magnificence—that is, all but the English visitor. It was one such gentleman, Edward Terry, who, in 1616, wrote enthusiastically if discreetly over this Hyderabadi dish:

They have not many roast or baked meats, but stew most of their flesh. Among many dishes of this kinde, Ile take notice but of one they call Deu Pario [Do Pyaza], made of vension cut in slices, to which they put onions and herbs, some rootes, with a little spice and butter: the most savorie meate I ever tasted, and doe almost thinke it that very dish which Jacob made ready for his father, when he got the blessing.

Pour all ingredients in this section into blender and reduce to a smooth paste.

1 *cup unflavoured yogurt*
1 *cup minced onion*
1 *Tbs. powdered coriander*
2 *tsp. salt*

Prick the meat strips with a fork and mix thoroughly with the paste. Leave to marinate in a warm place for at least 30 minutes.

2 *lbs. lean, boneless lamb, sliced into strips* 1 *inch by* ¼ *inch*

Preheat oven to 300° F.

In a heavy, medium-sized oven-proof casserole that can be tightly lidded, heat the butter and onions together and continue frying gently until the onions are uniformly brown and just crisping. Carefully remove them with a slotted spoon, pressing out oil. Crumble them directly into the 4 cups yogurt in a bowl. Set aside. Reserve butter in casserole for next step.

½ *cup clarified butter*
4 *cup onions, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices*
4 *cups unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with fork*

Place the marinated meat and the lid of the casserole close by the stove. Remove any specks of onion and heat the remaining frying butter to smoking. Drop in the crushed

12 *peppercorns, wrapped in a cloth and coarsely crushed*

Muslim warriors taking refreshments at a humble farm.

pepper and cover the pot immediately. Shake over fire for a few seconds. Off heat, drop in the meat and marinade. Again, cover and shake over high heat. Uncover and cook off all liquid, stirring with a spatula until the meat is nicely browned and half tender. Add 1 Tbs. water whenever necessary to prevent sticking if the liquid evaporates before the meat is tender.

1 *Tbs. turmeric*

Stir in turmeric and reserved yogurt and onions. Cover tightly and bake in oven for 30 minutes. Serve hot.

SERVES 4–6

The Opulentil
(Dal aur Bheja ka Daliya)

The seventh and last Nizam to rule Hyderabad was somewhat different from his predecessors. Although he had all their accumulated wealth, he lived the life of a miser. The

man who discovered the largest diamond in the world tucked in the toe of his late father's slipper (misplaced years before and forgotten) drove an ancient Ford, wore no jewellery himself, and personally wrote the menus for his seven palaces. Each of his sons kept a separate table but their father kept his hand on the purse. As a mark of special favor, he would sometimes send one son a dish from his own private kitchen. Often it was this savoury lentil—which tells a revealing secret: the Nizam did not stint his own table.

Wash brain. Cover with water in a small saucepan. Bring to boil. Skim, reduce heat, and cook uncovered for 15 minutes. Drain and cool. Carefully remove membrane and chop fine. Reserve.

¼ lb. lamb (or calf) brain, membrane intact

Meanwhile, in a heavy, medium-sized skillet, heat butter and fry onions until brown and crisp. Off heat, remove them with a slotted spoon and drop into blender. Reserve butter. Add all remaining ingredients in this section into blender and grind to a fine paste with ¼ cup water. Reserve in blender jar, next to stove.

6 Tbs. clarified butter
½ cup onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices
1½ tsp. scraped and minced ginger root
1 Tbs. minced garlic
¼ tsp. nutmeg
2 tsp. powdered coriander
½ tsp. ground hot red pepper
¼ tsp. turmeric
2 tsp. salt

Return skillet with remaining butter to medium heat. Stir in all ingredients in this section and sauté until they become fragrant and begin to pop. Stir in reserved blender paste with a spatula. Continue stirring and turning until the paste is khaki coloured and stirs together as a whole.

2 cloves
2 inches of cinnamon stick
4 peppercorns
½ tsp. cumin seed

Fold in the lentils and brain. Continue stirring and turn-

½ cup common lentils

reserved brain, chopped
2 cups beef bouillon

ing until they are lightly browned. Pour in the bouillon. Cover and cook over lowest possible heat until lentils are completely tender and liquid is absorbed (about 45 minutes).

¼ tsp. saffron threads
¼ cup hot cream

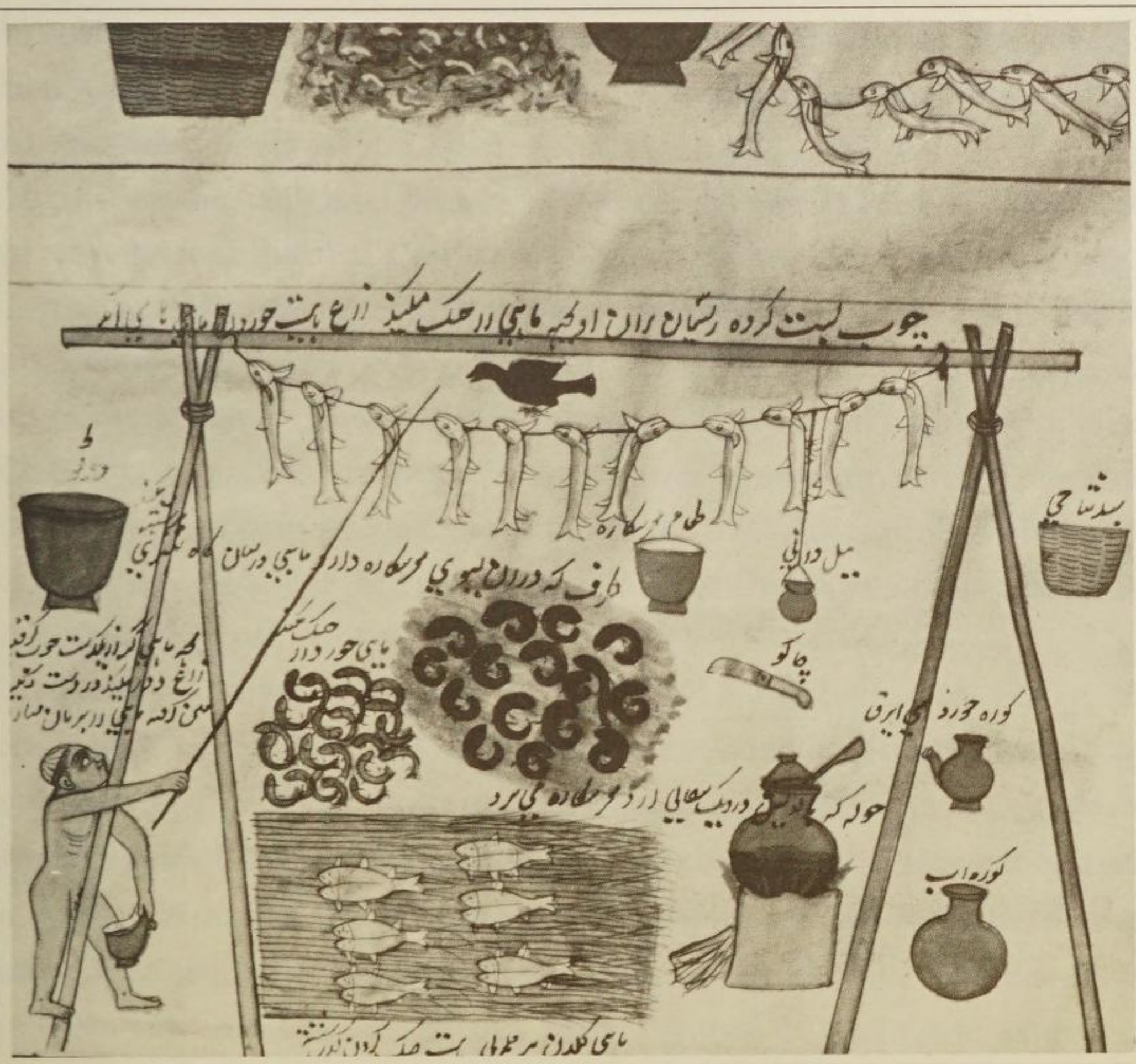
Meanwhile crumble saffron into a cup. Pour hot cream over it and leave to soak.

1 cup whole milk
1 cup beef bouillon

When lentils are ready, stir in milk and bouillon. Heat through. Just before serving, stir in saffron and cream. Serve very hot in small, individual soup bowls, to be poured over rice.

SERVES 6–8

Part III



NORTH INDIA

Overleaf: A Kashmiri fisherman strings his day's catch to dry.
Illustration from a nineteenth-century Kashmiri ms.

Fertile, green, and prosperous, the Punjab is the breadbasket of India. Its people are very productive workers; its food, by and large, is excellent.

The eating habits of the Punjab have spread throughout India, carried by Punjabi truck drivers, who rule the nation's highways and by-ways. Truck stalls, run by retired truck drivers, serve Punjabi food all over the country. In fact, wherever a North Indian is to be found in India, there will be restaurants serving Punjabi food.

Lest there be confusion between North India and each of its component parts, let it be said that the Punjab is only one part of the whole. Starting at the top with the Himalayas, there is the Princely State of Kashmir. Below that is Delhi, which was never a Princely State but was for a long time the center of the Mughal Empire. On its left is the Punjab and on its right, Uttar Pradesh. Uttar Pradesh was not a Princely State; but one part of it, Benares, was. Benares is, of course, the most famous part, and a center of cuisine all its own. It is a cuisine quite different from that of Kashmir, and from that of the Punjab as well.

Benares' food has remained essentially Hindu, light and vegetarian. There is little evidence of the Mughal influence so indelibly stamped on the Punjab, nor of the heavy, meat-oriented cuisine so unique to the Valley of Kashmir. Mughal influence took Indian cuisine and embellished it at every turn, so that, although the Mughal dynasty lost its hold on India in the mid-eighteenth century—at the time many Princely States were formed—it has been included as a chapter in this book because its influence cannot be ignored. Delhi was the center of the Mughal Empire, the Punjab its stomach, and Kashmir the keeper of its heart. The way to that heart—quite literally—was through the stomach, the Punjab. The Mughals took that route many times. Each time their elaborate processions passed through any region of India, their regiments consumed vast quantities of produce, and they also left behind a life style, complete with all the trappings necessary to maintain it: caravanserais or way stations, equipped to feed and house the traveller;

fruit trees, canals, a taste for "wine sherbets," almonds, enormous ovens . . . the list goes on and on.

These enormous Mughal ovens, or cone-shaped clay *tandoors,* produced the dishes so renowned today: *tandoori* chicken, *tandoori naan* (triangular puffs of white bread) , even certain types of skewered meats or *kababs,* which have become a North Indian trademark. These riches the Punjab was capable of providing in quantity. There has always been an abundance of wood to fire the *tandoors* and an abundance of grass to graze goats and sheep, who waxed fat and gave rich milk and butter. Punjabi bullocks and water buffalo are the largest in India. There is no lack of water, which flows down from the Himalayas, whose presence can be felt though not seen. This presence is an inspiration to all, but especially to Hindus, who revere the Himalayas as the abode of Lord Shiva and the source of the sacred Ganges.

If such abundance is pleasant in the fertile Punjab plains, it is blissful in the Himalayas, where the Valley of Kashmir is green—not with wheat, but with emerald rice fields. Paradoxically, the best of these green fields produces a rice that is red. Nutty and plump, it is hard to obtain, as the farmers keep it all for themselves. And there is more than one curiosity in Kashmir, "where only the poplars grow straight": the rice is red and also the tea, because of an interesting habit. Kashmiris drink "salt tea"; that is, tea leaves boiled with water, salt, milk, butter, and bicarbonate of soda. The result is red tea and, eventually, hardening of the arteries. But despite this, it gives great pleasure to the boatmen, farmers, and shepherds who drink it.

They squat around a samovar brought to the fields by a *pherin*-clad wife or daughter. The effect of the *pherin,* a short, loose caftan worn by most people in the valley, is to reduce both men and women to neuter bundles—two legs and long flapping sleeves. The sleeves flap because arms are withdrawn, either snuggled tightly against the body for warmth or wrapped around a *kangri,* a tiny earthenware brazier. This brazier, in which several coals are kept burning, lurks inside almost every *pherin,* just as cows are kept

under the country houses to share their warmth with their masters above.

After all bundles have finished their salt tea and tended their personal braziers, the hooka or water pipe is lit and passed around, along with the news of the day.

It would be no surprise if one of those *pherins* held a noble visitor from afar. Many a prince from all over India came to fish in Kashmir's famous trout streams. Squatting by the stream, he would share with fellow bundles the catch of the day, freshly grilled; then perhaps some crisp, sweet turnips or potatoes (for which Kashmir is justly famous), some red rice, and, finally, bowls full of Kashmir *saag*. Nowhere else in India can this leafy, green vegetable be persuaded to thrive; so the headman who brings it, steaming hot, from his house in a nearby village makes certain it is plentiful and well seasoned with sweet chilis and mustard oil.

There is often in Kashmir a *dunga* party or a traditional *wazwan* feast. On the *dunga,* the original Kashmir houseboat (a home for many local fishermen) , one is poled along through the lakes and canals that thread through the entire valley. Someone sings; someone recites; someone leisurely gathers in floating water chestnuts and lotus. Flower boats draw near and drift away; thoughts begin to turn to supper. Soon the cook announces dinner. The long bolster pillows are rearranged; soap and water brought and hands washed. Then begins a meal which may remain a mere dinner (five or six or seven courses) or evolve into a feast, a *wazwan* of sixteen to twenty dishes.

A former maharaja of Kashmir was renowned for such a supper—if not on a boat, then on a train or on the terrace of a half-built palace. His Highness had been told by a wise old *sufi* on the day he ascended the throne, that his reign and his life would end at the moment that he finished his palatial construction. (Anyone who suspected that the *sufi* was connected—even remotely—with a plumber or a mason in the region, felt ashamed of himself when, in fact, His Highness did die the very week that his last palace was finished.) In any case, his cooking parties were veritable events of state. Often

the guests were provided with aprons and requested to cook for themselves. Thus were born such dishes as "Corn with Green Walnuts" and "Rice from the Foothills," both of which make use of the Valley's fine produce and her unique cuisine, which is as different from Punjabi as Punjabi is from Benaresi. Together, however, they make up the cuisine of North India, robust and remarkable.

Twelve

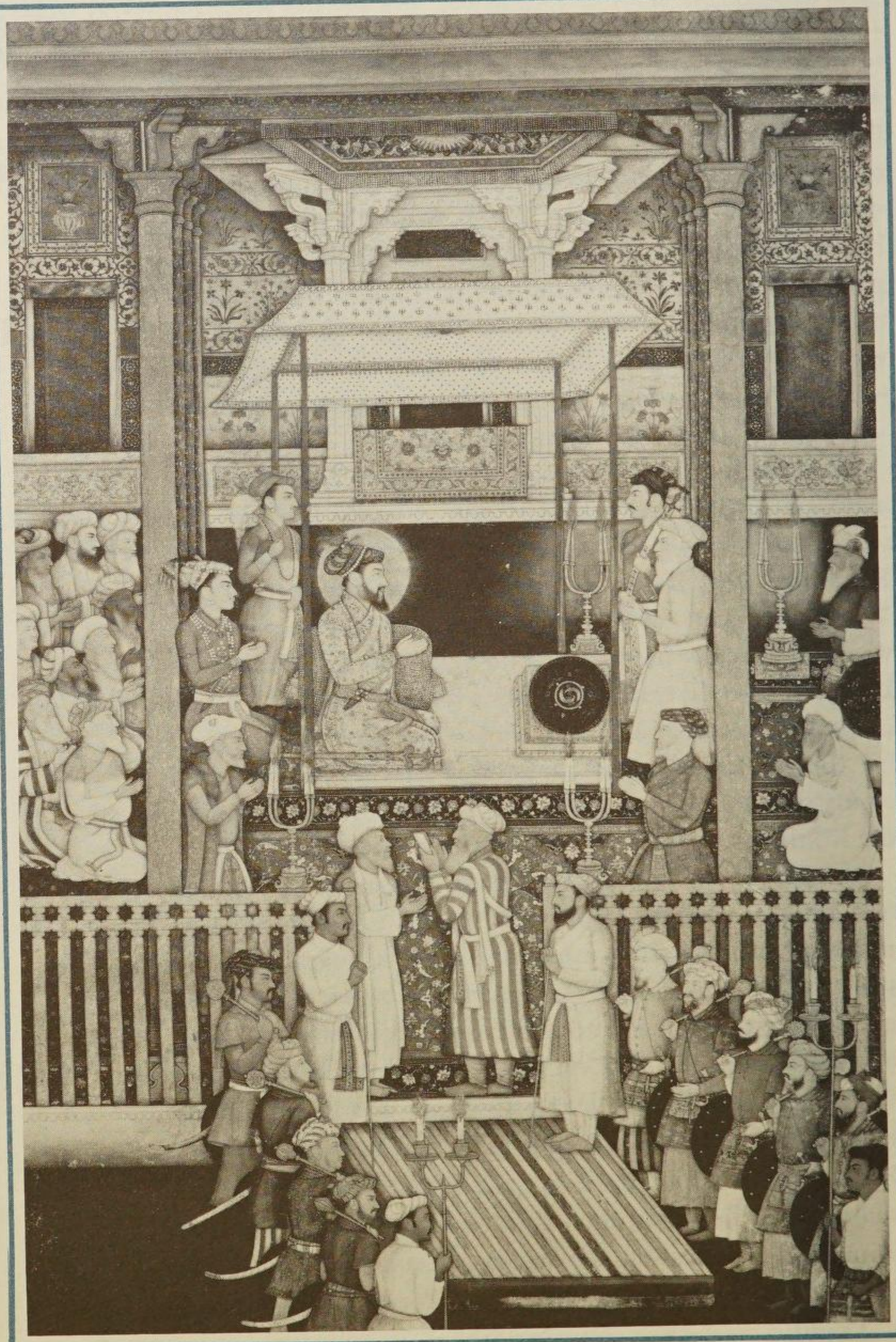
Patiala

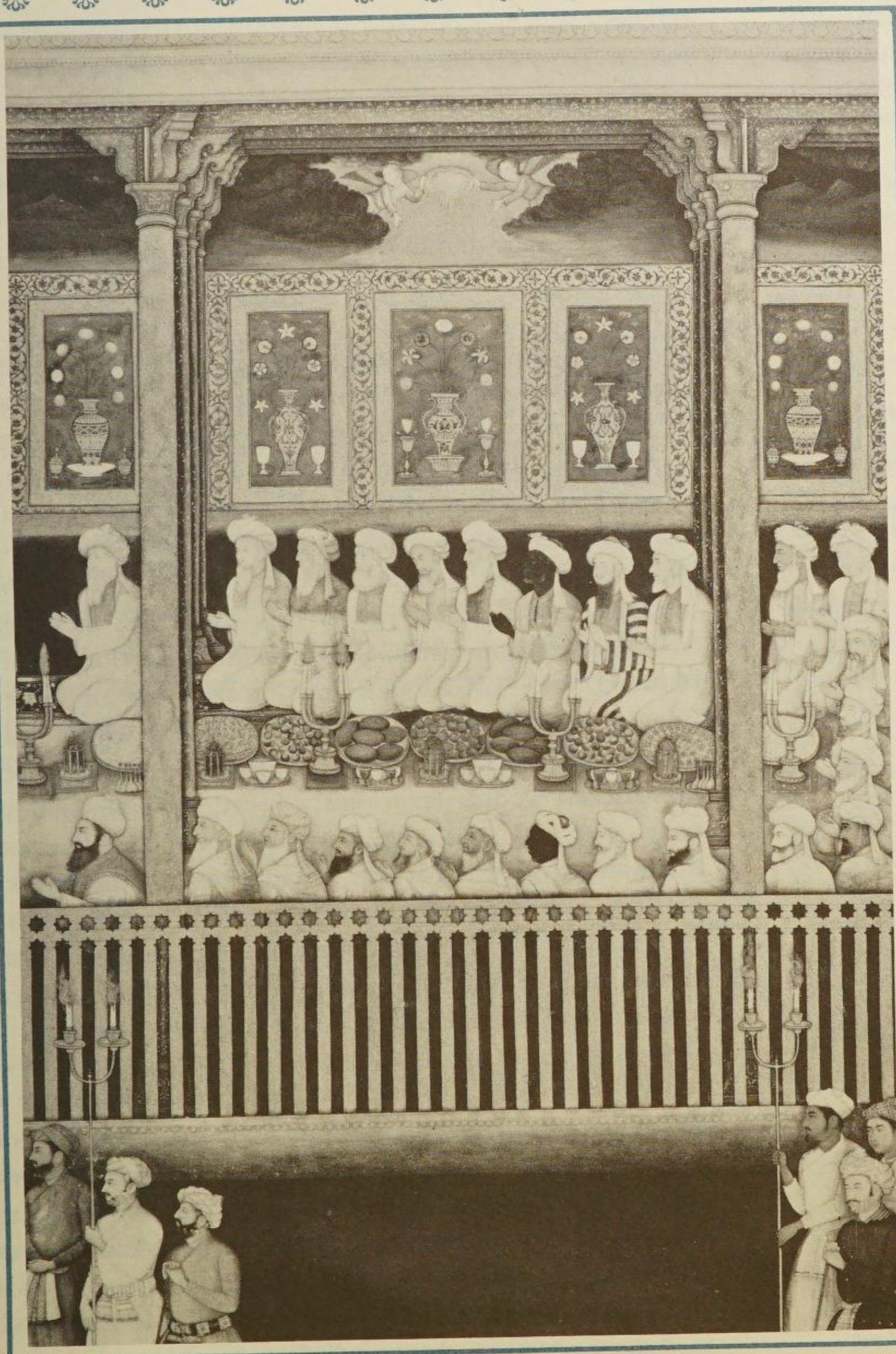
As "curry" is to Indian food, so the state of Patiala is to princes—*the* prototype that all (non-Indians) envision when they think of a maharaja. As Sikhs, the rulers of Patiala have long been beturbaned and bedaggered. Their religion forbids the cutting of hair; their culture favours strength and great height. From foothills that hint of Himalayas to the north through vast fields warm and golden with wheat, generations of Patiala princes have ridden—splendid, erect, and well fed. Not to be well fed would be as foreign to Patiala as not to hear stories of its wealth. One of the most famous concerns a certain diamond —one of the largest ever known in India.

Once upon a time, long ago, the Mughal chieftain, Humayan, surprised a wealthy Hindu ruler in his fort and took from him a very large gem. This stone, a diamond, Humayan offered to his father, Babur, founder of the Mughal dynasty. "You keep it, son," said that seasoned warrior. "I really have no use for such a thing." Humayan kept it. Several centuries later, having passed through many hands, it was acquired by the British from a powerful Sikh ruler, the Maharaja of Patiala. One hundred eighty-six and one-sixteenth carats—a Mountain of Light, the Kohinoor.

The last Princely State to possess the Kohinoor, Patiala had gone to great lengths to get it, and something of the noble spirit of the stone must have made its mark upon the state. Patiala and its impressive turbaned rulers are synonymous with abundance and generosity. Nowhere is it more evident than in the kitchen. Babur wrote of the Kohinoor, "Its reputation is that every appraiser has estimated its value at two and one-half days food for the whole world." Patiala alone might have prepared that food. From her rich and fertile lands, food flooded into the skilled hands of more than three hundred palace cooks and from there in delectable profusion to the palace's fifteen dining rooms.

Traditionally every orthodox Sikh must have on his person at all times certain things required by his race and





Overleaf: The Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan receives mullahs with offerings of sweetmeats.

religion: a bangle, a comb, a knife, a discus, and hair unshaven. Recent rulers of Patiala might well have added "a cooking pot." Many of them have been as fond of cooking food as they have been of eating it. Several of the recipes which follow have been perfected by the late maharajah. They draw upon the wealth of excellent ingredients available in the Punjab and the rich tradition of Patiala food.

Chicken, Cinnamon, and Steam
(Murg Dalchini)

An aide-de-camp to a former maharaja of Patiala once confided to his diary that "the Maharaja used to say he ate only one meal a day, but once he sent for me in the afternoon, and while he talked to me of business, he consumed three whole chickens with his tea." There can be no doubt that those delectable chickens were prepared in the following manner. Patiala, and the Punjab, are famous for their steam-cooked chickens. In the good old days, they were cooked in a *matka,* an unglazed earthenware pot, fat and rounded, with just enough opening to allow for the entrance of the bird. That opening was sealed with a mud-soaked cloth and the pot put in a hole in the ground. There the chicken would steam—fairly breathing cinnamon vapour—over very gentle coals. And no mere cook liberated this noble fowl when it was suitably tender; the pot was borne to a personal attendant, who struck it open with a sword, and a platter of rice was held underneath to catch all the fragrant sauce. Cornish game hens replace chickens in this recipe so that each guest may savour his own bird.

Preheat oven to 350° F.

¼ tsp. saffron threads
4 Cornish game hens, 1 lb. each
1 tsp. salt
seeds of 2 cardamom pods
1 tsp. coriander seed, slightly crushed

Crumble saffron into a cup and muddle with 1 tsp. hot water. Set aside. Remove the neck, heart, gizzard, et cetera, enclosed in the birds and tie them in a cheesecloth bag. Place in a medium-sized saucepan, cover with 3 cups water, and bring to a boil. Skim; then add salt, cardamom, coriander, and raisins. Boil uncovered until liquid is reduced to 2 cups. Remove cheesecloth bag. Sprinkle in the saf-

fron and its soaking water and stir in rice. When bag has cooled, squeeze its juices into boiling rice. Discard contents of bag. Continue to boil rice uncovered until liquid reaches level of rice. Turn off heat. Cover and leave to steam.

Meanwhile, heat butter to crackling in oven-proof casserole just large enough to hold the four birds. Pat birds completely dry, and brown on all sides, two birds at a time. Remove to a length of aluminium foil and fry onions in remaining butter until they are brown and crisp. Off heat, remove onions, pressing butter into the casserole. Crumble onions into the steamed rice and stuff it loosely into each bird. Press one ice cube into the center of each filled cavity and truss the birds very firmly. Sprinkle with salt.

Heat butter remaining in casserole to crackling. Drop in cinnamon. The moment it begins to crackle, put in the birds and cover casserole with the foil, crimping edges to seal. Put lid firmly in place and remove to preheated oven. Bake without opening for 30 minutes. Shake every 10 minutes. Open casserole at the table. Pass the cinnamon butter as sauce.

Serve with green vegetable.

3 *Tbs. seedless raisins*
2 *cups white, long-grain rice (not precooked)*

⅔ *cup clarified butter*
1 *cup onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices*
4 *ice cubes*
½ *tsp. salt*
poultry trussing thread

¼ *cup cinnamon sticks, broken into ½-inch lengths*

SERVES 4 GENEROUSLY

A meal without meat is but grass.
—Proverb of the Punjab

Patiala Vegetables
(Subzi Patiala)

Ninety-nine percent of the time, this proverb would be accepted without question. The late maharaja of Patiala, however, was as expert in agriculture as he was in the kitchen. In this recipe, he has brought excellent ingredients to gentle but distinctive perfection. These saucy vegetables are best served in a small bowl or poured over rice. Should the milk accidentally overflow the pot, do not be disturbed. Punjabis hold that milk that boils quickly promises abundance. If it spills over on all sides, there will be abundance

for all; if only on one side, the lucky person standing there will have good fortune.

1 *Tbs. chopped garlic*
1/3 *cup clarified butter*
5 *Tbs. chopped onion*

Drop the garlic into the blender and purée with 1/2 cup water. Keep this garlic water next to the stove. Heat butter and onions together in medium-sized saucepan. Simmer, adding garlic water gradually until onions are tender and raw smell of garlic has disappeared.

1/2 *tsp. turmeric*
3 *cups mixed fresh vegetables, diced (carrot, cauliflower, bell pepper, et cetera)*
2 *tsp. salt*
2 *cups fresh green peas (or 1 package frozen unthawed)*
1 *Tbs. scraped and julienned ginger root*
1 *Tbs. seeded and minced fresh, green chili*
3 1/2 *cups whole milk*

Off heat, stir in turmeric. Add mixed vegetables (not peas) and salt. Return to medium heat and stir until just tender. Add all remaining ingredients in this section and stir uncovered over high heat until peas are tender and milk is reduced by half.

2 *Tbs. minced fresh coriander leaf (cilantro), or 2 Tbs. minced parsley*
Pinch each of clove, black pepper, and powdered cardamom

Garnish and serve immediately in small, individual bowls.

SERVES 4–6

Butchers prepare a leg of mutton. (Nimat Namah)

Kohinoor Kabab

(Raan ka Kabab)

After a fast a feasting; and after a feasting a fast.
—Proverb of Northern India

Once a year the lusty folk of the Punjab tighten their belts for a fast. For seven nights they go to bed hungry in preparation for the feast of Dassera. According to legend, the demons who once ruled over the Punjab became very angry with their people and forbade them to eat anything (the demons taking all the food for themselves). The people prayed to Durga, wife of Lord Shiva, who fought the demons for seven days. On the eighth day, victorious, she went among the people and advised them to feast joyously. What better way than this leg of lamb? On the last day of the seven-day fast, simply set it to marinating. Two hours before the fast may be broken, suspend it over the coals (or in the oven). Stand back and watch the demons sorrow.

½ cup blanched unsalted almonds
⅓ cup minced dried figs
¼ cup fresh lime juice
½ cup minced onion
2 tsp. minced garlic
1 Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root
2 tsp. salt
½ tsp. ground hot red chili pepper
1 Tbs. powdered coriander
2 tsp. powdered cinnamon
½ cup whipping cream

At least 3 hours before cooking, grind all ingredients in this section, adding them into the blender one by one in listed order, until the whole is reduced to a smooth paste. It does not matter if the almonds remain in slightly larger pieces; that will add to the interesting texture of the marinade.

4 lbs. leg of lamb

Prick the lamb all over with a fork and cover it on all sides with the blender paste. Leave to sit, unrefrigerated, for at least 2½ hours (6 hours refrigerated).

Two hours before serving, preheat oven to 450° F.

Place the lamb on the rack of a roasting pan and sear it at 450° F. for 15 minutes. Reduce heat to 350° F. and roast for 1 hour and 15 minutes more (for medium); 1 hour 45 minutes more (for well done). Serve whole or sliced and covered with the sauce.

SERVES 6–8

Serve with rice and vegetable.

Potatoes to Perfume the Palace
(Dum Allu)

The state of Patiala is synonymous with generosity and with generous proportions. Perhaps no one ever knew, during the golden days, just how many horses, jewels, guests, or offspring moved in the maharaja's bountiful orbit. It is said that to this day some of his children have not been introduced to their brothers. Although the dimensions of

the palace allowed for such a possibility, it is improbable that they did not meet whenever these elegant potatoes perfumed that establishment. On those days forgotten relatives and obscure retainers were irresistibly drawn from the farthest corners to the central dining room. The universal appeal of this dish is due to a simple trick: All of the most fragrant of the "warming spices" are roasted gently, then ground and finally steamed with the potatoes and butter. These "warming spices," or *garam masalas,* include cloves, black pepper, cinnamon, bay leaf, cardamom, cumin, and black cumin (somewhat similar to caraway seed) . Because they are believed to "warm" the bodily fires, they are called "warming"—not *tikkut,* as a chili would be, meaning very spicy and hot. The price of these spices has always been high—especially cloves and cardamom. Today sprinkling *garam masala* on a dish is like sprinkling pure gold. Still, many recipes call for a pinch and most kitchens boast a small jar in the pantry—roasted and ground in the house.

Place rack in middle of oven and preheat oven to broil.

Prick potatoes all over with fork and put to soak in 2 cups salted water until needed.

1 *lb. whole new potatoes, peeled*

Arrange all the ingredients in this section in separate islands around the edges of an ungreased cookie tin and place in preheated oven. Place the blender jar near the oven. Keep oven door open and watch carefully, as ingredients will brown at different speeds. Using a bit of folded towel, slide each ingredient into the blender as it is toasted golden. Grind them all together to a fine powder.

1 *tsp. cumin seed*
2 *tsp. coriander seed*
8 *peppercorns*
16 *almonds, blanched and unsalted*
1 *tsp. poppy seed*
4 *cloves*
6 *cardamom pods*
2 *Tbs. dried, unsweetened coconut*
Pinch of nutmeg

Reduce oven to 300° F.

Combine all ingredients in this section with those already

8 *garlic buds*

4 tsp. scraped and minced ginger root
½–1 tsp. ground hot red pepper (to taste)
½ tsp. turmeric
1 cup chopped onion

ground in blender. Grind and scrape to a fine paste with ¼ cup water. Remove to a plate and keep next to the stove.

⅓ cup clarified butter

Drain the potatoes and pat completely dry. Heat the butter in a medium-sized, oven-proof casserole and fry potatoes golden. Remove and reserve.

reserved blender paste
½ cup unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with fork
1 cup hot water

In the remaining butter, fry the ground onions and spices until brown. Turn constantly with a spatula. Reduce heat to low. Add 2 Tbs. yogurt whenever necessary to prevent sticking. When half of the yogurt has been added, put in the potatoes and cook for 5 minutes. Then add the rest of the yogurt and the hot water. Cover and put in oven for 20 minutes.

SERVES 4

The longer the potatoes sit before serving, the more their flavour increases. Reheat gently just before serving.

Preparation of the Royal Puri.

Terrible Tomatoes and Meat
(Rogan Josh)

In the Punjab, as in all India, there were many mothers whose large families were depleted by "the ever present evil eye." In order to foil this ill fate and preserve the life of a newborn child, a mother who had already lost many children would give her baby a frightening name. Surely a boy with the name "Rubbish" could never attract the evil eye; he would be left to grow and prosper without attracting unwanted comment. The real name of this excellent dish—*Rogan Josh*—has become so common, and the dish itself so prostituted by overexposure, that a terrible name has been given to this version, in the hopes it will avoid the same fate. Tomatoes and Meat, or *Rogan Josh,* uses the same techniques and many of the same spices as Potatoes to Perfume the Palace. The result is a delightful combination, deserving of every good fortune.

Place rack in middle of oven and preheat to broil.

Blanch tomatoes in boiling water. Peel, chop and reserve. Drop chilis whole into hot water and leave to soak.

4 *medium-sized, ripe tomatoes*
3–6 *dried hot red chilis, seeded (to taste)*
1 *cup hot water*

Arrange all the ingredients in this section in separate groups around the edges of an ungreased cookie tin. Place the tin in the middle of preheated oven. Place the blender jar next to the oven, and watch toasting process carefully. With a bit of folded cloth, slide each ingredient into the jar as it is toasted. Almonds and coconut take a bit longer and should not be put into the blender until all the other ingredients have been pulverized. They should then be pulverized by grinding everything a second time.

2 *Tbs. coriander seed*
2 *tsp. cumin seed*
2 *tsp. poppy seed*
10 *cardamom pods*
1 *tsp. peppercorns*
12 *cloves*
1/8 *tsp. whole nutmeg*
4 *blades mace*
2 *Tbs. blanched, unsalted almonds*
1/2 *cup grated, unsweetened coconut*

Add all ingredients in this section to those already in the blender. Blend and scrape to a fine paste. Remove and reserve on a plate next to the stove.

10 *garlic buds*
1/4 *cup scraped and minced ginger root*

1 *tsp. turmeric*
reserved chilis and soaking water

3 *medium-sized onions, peeled and chopped*

Without washing the blender, drop in onions and pulverize with 4 Tbs. water. Reserve in blender jar next to stove.

1 *cup clarified butter*
1 *cup unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with fork*
3 *lbs. lean, boneless lamb, preferably leg or shoulder, cut into 2-inch cubes*
4 *tsp. salt*
1 *cup hot water*

In a heavy, medium-sized saucepan, heat the butter and pour in the ground onions. Stir and turn with spatula until they are brown and have lost their raw smell. Off heat, stir in the reserved spicy paste. Return to medium heat and continue stirring for 10 minutes. Add 2 Tbs. yogurt whenever the paste begins to stick. Then add the reserved tomatoes. Stir for 5 minutes. Add meat and salt and brown slightly. Add the hot water. Cover the pot with a pie pan, filled with water. Simmer for 1½ hours over lowest possible heat. (The water on top prevents condensation inside the pot and allows the meat to cook in its own steam.)

3 *Tbs. minced fresh coriander (cilantro), or 3 Tbs. minced parsley*

Garnish and serve hot with rice or chapati.

SERVES 6

Puris

These little wheaten bubbles have a thousand uses—snacks, scoops for food, complement to hot spices—but above all they are fun to make. The method given here is unorthodox to a point; usually each little round cake is rolled out separately, a labour of love and patience. Rolling as in this recipe and cutting with a cookie cutter is perhaps a severe blow to tradition. The results, however, are excellent and the feeling of achievement as each one puffs will offset any qualms about cheating. *Puri* dough must be prepared ahead of time; the longer it rests the better. The *puris* themselves may also be fried up to a half-hour before the meal and kept on paper towels in a warm oven. More amusing, how-

ever, and much better tasting, are *puris* fried right at the table. Prepare each little flat cake, layer them in a damp cloth and bring to the table in a basket. Keep the oil hot in a fondue pot and fry each *puri* fresh as it is needed. Totally unorthodox and great fun.

2 cups whole-wheat flour, as finely ground as possible
1 tsp. salt
3 Tbs. clarified butter

At least 1 hour before cooking, combine flour and salt in a large mixing bowl. Rub in butter with the fingertips until there are no lumps left. Pour in ¼ cup lukewarm water and blend it in thoroughly with one hand. Continue adding water, 1 Tbs. at a time, until the flour holds together easily in a ball. It should not be sticky. (Usually about ¾ cup; do not add more than 1 cup.)

Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead it for at least 10 minutes. When it is ready it will be smooth and elastic and will not break off roughly when bent. Shape into a ball, cover with a damp cloth, and leave to rest for at least 30 minutes at room temperature. (Two hours is ideal.)

Thirty minutes before serving, preheat oven to 200° F.

vegetable oil for frying

Pour 2 inches of oil in a small saucepan, skillet, or wok and place over very high heat. Lightly flour a board. Divide the dough in four parts and roll out each part until it is as thin as possible without tearing. Cut out 3-inch-diameter circles and cover with a damp cloth. Test the oil with a tiny ball of dough. If it does not sink, the oil is ready. Using a slotted spoon, drop in the circles, one or two at a time. Press them under the surface gently. They will puff almost instantly. Flip once and remove immediately. Drain and place in pre-heated oven. Fry all thus (preferably as they are needed). Let the oil reheat two seconds before each new addition. It may be necessary to lower heat somewhat as frying progresses.

Serve with any meat or vegetable. Dust with salt if serving as snack.

MAKES ABOUT 32

Lentils and Green Tomatoes
(Patiala Dal)

People of the Punjab are wheat-eaters. They almost always prefer bread to rice. And there is nothing nicer to accompany that bread—especially a *puri*—than this flavourful combination of lentils and very young tomatoes, fresh from the garden. Use the *puri* as a delicate little scoop and dip it directly into the lentils.

¼ cup clarified butter or vegetable oil
3 cups evenly chopped onion
½ tsp. minced garlic
½ tsp. turmeric

In a heavy, medium-sized saucepan, heat the butter and fry onions gently until they are just clear and tender. Add garlic and stir until both are golden. Mix the turmeric with 1 Tbs. water and stir in just as the onions are beginning to crisp. Continue stirring for 1 minute.

1 cup green tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped fine
1½ tsp. peeled and grated ginger root

Off heat, stir in the tomatoes. Return to heat. Add 1 cup water. Cover and cook until tomatoes are puréed, stirring occasionally. Add the ginger and continue cooking until butter bubbles up through the tomato purée. Control sticking with tablespoonfuls of water as necessary.

1½ cups moong dal (available at specialty shops)
1½–3 tsp. seeded and minced fresh, green chili
3 tsp. salt
juice of 2 limes

When the purée is ready, stir in the bean seeds. Add water to cover 1 inch (approximately 5 cups), green chili, and salt. Simmer partially covered until beans are tender. There should still be at least 4 cups of liquid. Squeeze lime over the soup just before serving in small, individual bowls, accompanied by hot, white rice.

SERVES 6–8

Mustard Greens
(Sarsoon ka Sag)

O daughter-in-law, today I want the leaves, the tender leaves, plucked from the tops of young grain in the field.
Tomorrow it will be fenugreek that I require.
On Wednesday, I myself shall nip the pale mustard tops and you will cook them delicately in oil.
On the following day, a wild potherb will do.
On Friday, still another, much more satisfying to the hungry—the yam.

Don't forget!
And after that, eggplant will follow, stewed and spiced.
—Folk Song of Northern India

Surprising as it may seem, this is a nonvegetarian song. When winter comes to the Punjab, vegetables abound. His Highness and the entire court can be seen, barely touching their meat, jewelled fingers fairly gleaming with butter as they indulge themselves in a Punjabi favourite, *Makki ki Roti* and *Sarsoon ka Sag*—leaves of the "pale, young mustard" simmered long and lovingly, then eaten with corn bread. As a rule enough of these two are made to last the court for several days, the theory being that a little more butter, added every day, gives just that much more pleasure until the last day is pure bliss.

Pick and clean the greens. Discard only the very tough portions of stem. There should be as much stem as possible remaining. If using mustard greens, peel off the outer fibres of the stems, leaving only the tender insides.

Place greens in a large pot. Add salt and cover with 1 quart of water. Boil until completely tender. This will take 3–4 hours for the mustard greens (1 hour in pressure cooker). Remove greens with slotted spoon. Place in large strainer and press all the juices back into the pot. Reduce these juices to 2 cups. Reserve.

Cup by cup, purée the drained greens in the blender. Add 2 Tbs. broth and 2 Tbs. corn meal with each grinding. Return all ground greens to the pot of reserved broth. Add chili, ginger, and sugar. Stir constantly over medium heat for 10 minutes, or until the greens look like a thick purée. (Beware of spattering.) Taste for salt and remove from heat.

In a very small saucepan, heat butter to crackling. Tip pan and toss cumin and red chili into collected butter. Shake pan over fire until they begin to spit. Pour spices and butter into the greens. Stir and serve very hot with thick slices of corn bread.

4 lbs. mustard greens, or spinach
2 tsp. salt
about ½ cup fine corn meal
½–1 tsp. ground hot red pepper
1 tsp. sugar
1 Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root
4 Tbs. clarified butter
2 tsp. cumin seed
1 tsp. crushed red chili pieces (optional)

SERVES 6

Corn Bread
(Makki ki Roti)

Among the Sikh people of Northern India unleavened bread has a special significance beyond its delicious flavour. When a new son is baptized into the Sikh faith, water that has been stirred with a dagger is sprinkled over his head and a bit of bread, often this corn bread, is placed in his mouth. The bread has first been passed from hand to hand among eight persons in order to eliminate by example any hint of caste contamination. The Sikhs, being a people without caste, hold that food may be freely exchanged between peoples of any race and any social standing. The bread is a token of that belief.

1½ cups corn meal
1 tsp. salt
½ cup water

Sift corn meal and salt into large mixing bowl. Make a well in the centre and slowly pour in water, gathering flour with one hand until it holds together but is not sticky. (Add up to 2 Tbs. extra water as necessary.) Knead on a board until the dough is pliant and thoroughly blended. It should still be quite stiff.

Break off the equivalent of ½ cup dough. Roll into a smooth ball and dust with flour. Press it flat with palm and continue to press and turn until the dough is ⅛ inch thick and 4 inches in diameter.

Heat ungreased griddle or very heavy skillet until drop of water dances on it. Reduce heat to medium low. Place breads so that they will cook evenly. Do not crowd. Occasionally revolve them in the skillet with fingertips until one side is golden brown and mottled. Turn once (beware of breaking) and cook second side to same colour.

Clarified butter

Serve hot with ample butter, poked into the bread, mustard greens, and yogurt. (This bread is too heavy to accompany meat.)

SERVES 4

Little to eat and a life at Benares
—Proverb of North India

Thirteen

Benares

This proverb may be a bit misleading. Little to eat is a spiritual ideal—a sort of religious goal; less of body, more of soul. According to this theory one is lighter and purer the less one eats. But ironically the obstacle is life at Benares itself.

The city is as famous for its vegetarian cuisine as for its bathers and its sacred river. The bathers, in fact, bear witness to this irony, a goodly number being sizable indeed. Fasting in Benares can mean feasting; and a great deal of both goes on. The rituals of death are an excellent example and in a way characteristic of Benares. Almost every aspect of these rituals involves food, including the disposal of the corpse.

As Benares is the most sacred city in Hindu religion and lore, it behooves relatives of the deceased to cremate the corpse there if they can possibly arrange it. This may mean hours or days of walking and again hours awaiting a turn at the fires kept burning by the side of the Ganges. At last, just before the funeral pyre is lighted, they will anoint the body, rubbing clarified butter in the eyes, nostrils, and ears. And when the fires have died, leaving only the bones, these bones will be gathered and washed in milk. Only then can weary relatives consider their duty to the deceased fulfilled. One part of the duty, that is. Now begins a period of mourning which—again—involves considerable eating and food. Immediately after the washing of the bones, relatives will retire to eat sweets, far from the burning grounds on the river, in the busiest part of the bazaar. There, in silence, they begin eating confections made of milk and nuts and clarified butter, and wrapped in silver paper if the purse allows. Bernares is famous for these myriad sweets, so unlike the chocolates and pastries of the West.

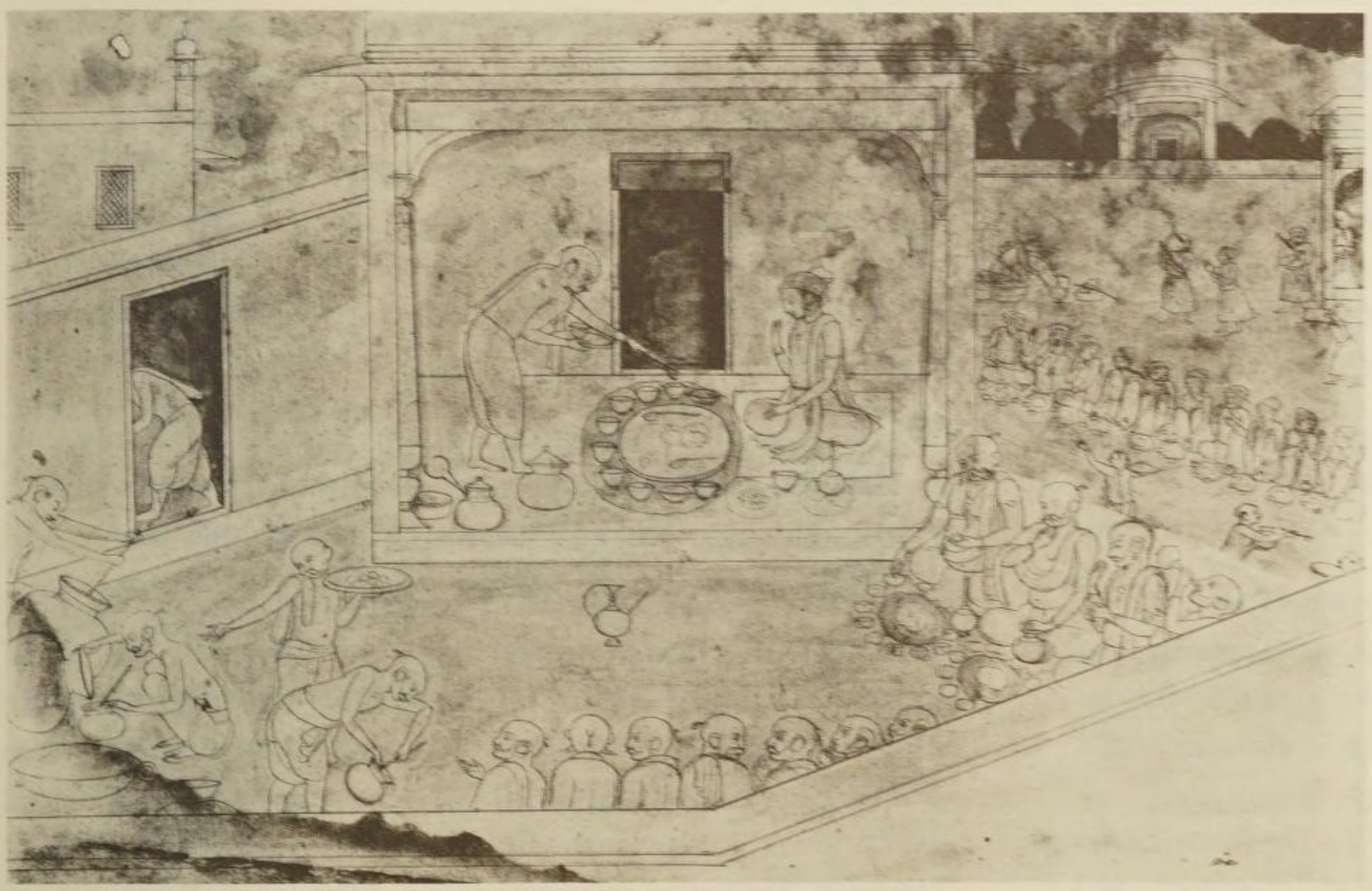
Muslim and Hindu alike believe that the dead soul must be nourished for a certain period before entering the abode

where it will await the next life. Some think that food taken one day after the death re-creates a head for the deceased in his next life; food taken in the second day will provide a neck for him and so on, until a complete new body is created. The relatives may then cease to eat symbolically for the deceased, who is capable of feeding himself.

But once a year forever thereafter the deceased is fed by his relatives during the days of Shraddha, which means literally "food given with faith"—a special food that is eaten with reverence for the dead. Shraddha is both a fast and a feast. Observation of this ceremony varies all over India; but it generally lasts for fifteen days. Those who ordinarily eat meat refrain from it at this time as a respectful penance for their dead. Others believe exactly the opposite, as is written in the ancient Kurma Purana: "One who does *not* take flesh in the Shraddha is born again and again as an animal. Only women whose husbands are away should refrain from meat." (Meat is believed by many to be an exciting stimulant.) The theories vary from sect to sect.

Vegetarians give up their staple foods, such as wheat flour and rice. They lay water and foods such as butter, sesame seeds, and balls of rice in their courtyards for the dead to consume. Sometimes special offerings of yogurt or cakes are made for certain departed ones who misbehaved in this life and may need extra help to clear their records for the next. Such a lavish sacrifice as this is also believed to bring much-wanted offspring to those who make the offering.

All special foods, whether for fast or for feast, are rather similar. They contain none of the usual rice, wheat, or cereal flour so dear to the Indian diet. It is considered a sort of sacrificial penance to deviate from the norm: "The very smell of the mouth of a keeper of fast is more agreeable to God than the smell of musk." Unusual cereals such as water-chestnut flour, tapioca, or millet are substituted instead. Even fruits may be used in place of flours—as in this recipe for a well-known side dish of yogurt, where bananas replace the usual chick-pea flour:



Brahmins lunch with Nal, royal author of a fifth-century cookbook.

The Bananas of Benares

(Kele ke Barde)

6 *large green bananas, or plantains, unpeeled*

Two hours before serving, quarter the unpeeled bananas and plunge them into boiling water until tender. Drain and cool. Peel and mash with forks in a large mixing bowl. (Do not blend in blender.)

2 *Tbs. coarsely chopped fresh coriander leaf (cilantro), or 2 Tbs. coarsely chopped parsley*

Oil the hands fairly liberally. Lightly press 1 Tbs. mashed banana into the palm of one hand. Make a well in its centre. Fill with a pinch of each ingredient in this section. Close the banana over the stuffing and very, very lightly roll it into a ball between the palms.

2 *Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root*
3 *Tbs. seedless raisins*
2 *fresh, green chilis, seeded and minced (optional)*
1 *Tbs. cumin seed*
2 *tsp. salt*

vegetable oil to cover a depth of 3 inches

When all the balls are ready, set them next to the stove. In a small skillet or saucepan, heat oil and fry the balls gently, 3 or 4 at a time, until they are crisp and golden brown.

1 *cup unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with a fork*
1 *tsp. coriander seed*
1 *tsp. cumin seed*
1 *Tbs. fresh coriander leaf (cilantro), or* 1 *Tbs. parsley, finely minced*
½ *tsp. ground hot red pepper (optional)*

Pour the yogurt into an attractive serving bowl. Beat smooth with enough water to make it the consistency of cream. No more than 2 hours before serving, place the fried banana balls to soak in this yogurt. Meanwhile place the cumin and coriander seeds in an ungreased skillet and shake over a medium fire until they are brown and fragrant. Pulverize in the blender. Mix with all remaining ingredients in this section and sprinkle over the yogurt and banana just before serving.

SERVES 4

Serve as an accompaniment to a light, cool meal. A unique addition to texture and taste.

Sweet Innocence
(Kir)

The leavings of special feast or fast meals are believed, for various and complex reasons, to be charged with a great and potentially harmful power. For this power to be nullified, the leftovers must be thrown into a purifying fire, given to a holy cow, or tossed upon the roof of the house for the crows to eat. Only then will the spirit of the deceased be satisfied and depart without harming the household. And only then are the relatives free to enjoy a ritual dish of *kir*. An early traveller in India describes this milky pudding, which is an essential

part of the mourning ritual but also a favorite dessert throughout India: "Kir is a particular innocent kind of Diet, fed upon by the Indians for the most part about Noon. It is sweet Milk turn'd thick, mix'd with boil'd Rice and Sugar, and is very effectual against the Rage of Fever and Fluxes, the prevailing Distempers of India. Early in the Morning, or late at Night, they seldom touch it, because they esteem it too cool for their Stomachs and Nocturnal Delights."

Wash the rice briefly. Soak it in ½ cup water for 30 minutes in a medium-sized saucepan. Then boil in the same water until rice is tender and water completely evaporated.

In a separate saucepan, heat the milk. Stir in the cooked rice. Simmer uncovered over very low heat for 1½ hours. Stir occasionally, loosening the pudding from sides and bottom of the pan. Mash the rice with the stirring spoon.

When the pudding is quite creamy, stir in the sugar. Continue stirring until it is dissolved and pudding is again creamy. Off heat, add all remaining ingredients in this section. Serve hot or at room temperature in small individual bowls.

¼ cup white, long-grained rice (not precooked)

4 cups whole milk

½ cup sugar, or to taste
2 Tbs. seedless raisins, soaked soft in water
¼ tsp. seeds of cardamom pods, crushed
2 tsp. rose-water (optional)

SERVES 4

Food is as much a part of birth ceremonies as it is of death ceremonies.

Food is man's life and clothes afford protection.
Gold gives him beauty,
Marriage brings cattle.
His wife is a friend, his daughter causes pity.
A son is like a light in highest heaven.
—*Aitareya Brahmana,* 600 B.C.

Happy is the man in India who produces a son, and fortunate the woman who bears him. His presence is crucial to a father's spiritual release from this life—so crucial, in fact, that the ancient texts recorded special rules for a father desiring a son. During the conception of the child, the hopeful father must grasp his beloved's thumb. If he holds it firmly, he will produce a son, according to the ancient texts. If, by some chance, he should desire a daughter, he must hold his wife's little finger. Impartial fathers may leave their fate to the gods by grasping her entire hand.

Mother, during her pregnancy, is fed all nature's bounty that the family could possibly afford. Well-meaning relatives worry constantly over her diet; she must consume as many products of the sacred cow as possible—clarified butter, cooling milk, and curd. In the early days of Indian history, even beef itself was recommended. Father would ply her with gifts of barley, fruit, and grain—all blessed by the priests (just in case the thumb method should fail).

Every fantasy and craving of the pregnant mother was noted with greatest attention. A medical text of the fourth century B.C. devoted lengthy chapters to longings during pregnancy.

A longing for beef on the part of the mother, during gestation, indicates the birth of a strong and vigorous child capable of sustaining any amount of fatigue and physical pain. The mother's longing for buffalo meat indicates the birth of a hairy, valiant, and red-eyed child, et cetera. The desires of a woman during her pregnancy are determined by ordained fate and effects of the acts of the child in its prior existence.

—*Sushruta Samhita,* fourth to second century B.C.

During the actual birth of the child, a cow would often be led into the delivery room. The faces of both mother and newborn child would be slapped three times with the

cow's tail as a precaution against the evil eye. The infant's head was then rubbed with a cloth dipped in clarified butter and his lips touched with a golden spoon filled with honey, clarified butter, hairs from an auspicious black bull, and powdered gold dust.

Six months later *Anna prasna* takes place—one of the most important ceremonies in the life of a Hindu. *Anna prasna* celebrates the first solid-food feeding, the end of the breast-feeding period. For purely sentimental reasons, boys were feted on even months of the year; girls on odd months (if at all).

All manner of relatives and priests assembled for the ceremony. The first food given to the child would portend the course of his future. Although the ancient texts simply stated that "foods of all kinds and flavours should be mixed together and given to the child to eat," in practice things were much more complicated. In the first millennium B.C., beef was the preferred first food of a child. Goat's flesh was "conducing to nourishment," partridge flesh gave "holy lustre," fish was thought to give "swiftness," and rice would "endow the child with splendour." For the children of kings, special rare and potent ingredients were added to this first feeding: "The baby should be made to lick an electuary composed of honey, clarified butter, and the expressed juice of Brahmi leaves and *ananta* mixed with one-tenth of a gram of gold dust, and given with the ring finger of the feeder" (*Sushruta Samhita*).

Every bit of this ritual food had to be properly cleaned and cooked to the chanting of appropriate hymns. It was offered first to the sacrificial fire, then to the priests and guests, next to the father. Lastly it was given to the child. Throughout this offering, the father had to whisper into the child's ear, chanting his special hopes and blessings:

May vigour come to us today.
Through up-breathing, may I enjoy food, Svaha.
Through down-breathing, may I enjoy food, Svaha.

These customs and rituals originated more than three thousand years ago; they continue today.

Benares is the seat of all these ceremonies, the heart of Hindu custom and continuity. Consequently it has always been the stronghold of religious etiquette—especially the amalgam of etiquette, obligations, and taboos that surround the subject of food, and that developed partly for health reasons and partly to preserve caste purity.

Caste, obviously, is all-important to the orthodox Hindu. His life is crowded with a bewildering complexity of castes, subcastes, and sub-subcastes, each of whose boundaries is rigorously, and even fanatically guarded. One of the easiest and most commonly used criteria for determining caste status concerns who can receive food or water from whom without incurring pollution, since food and water are highly susceptible to contamination from something ritually "unclean," or from someone of a lower caste. Should the least glance or even shadow of a lower-caste person fall upon the food of a higher-caste man, and should he eat that food, the poor fellow would be polluted and therefore ineligible to eat with his caste fellows—a shameful disgrace for a Hindu. (Uncooked food does not pollute when exchanged for the very practical reason that the swarming market places are impossible jumbles of many difficult-to-define castes and subcastes.) To guard against disasters of caste pollution, the ancient Hindus went to extraordinary lengths to be specific in counseling what, how, and from whom to eat. Some of the earliest texts forbid consumption of "the meat of one-hoofed animals, of camels, of village pigs, of locusts, of cattle . . . of animals having a double row of teeth or excessive hair or of those who have no hair; or the eating of fish. . . ." Later it was laid down that "a man should not eat the food of a backbiter, a dealer in *soma,* an acrobat, one who is ungrateful, a potter, a fisherman, an actor, a goldsmith, a musician, a dealer in arms, a hunter, a dealer in liquors, a washerman, a cruel person, a barber, a physician, a woman who has a

second husband, a prostitute and a harlot" (*Mahabarata Manu*).

That left, as lawful food, such items as "peacock, horse, white ass, female sparrow, wild cock and wild pig. The cow, goat and deer, because they are animals with one line of teeth. . . ." On top of all that, one of the most ancient of injunctions lays down that a person "should not eat during an eclipse of the moon or of the sun, or when a cow, a Brahmin, or a king meets with an accident. . . ." In short, there was more to eating than met the eye.

Even the food of the gods was subject to complications. In India deities have long been fed, clothed, and cared for as though they were beloved human beings. Members of many religious sects in India will never touch food without first making an offering of food to their deity. In the courtyard of many a Hindu home is a raised bed of earth in which grows the sacred *tulsi,* or basil plant, a bit of which is always given as an offering to Lord Vishnu, god of preservation. Because *tulsi* represents Lakshmi, Vishnu's lovely consort and goddess of well-being and prosperity, it is never given to Lord Shiva, the god of destruction.

Once a year Vishnu, in his incarnation as Krishna, is also offered a literal mountain of rice by his followers. Up to one hundred thirty pounds of snow-white rice pyramid up from the great plinths of Vishnu temples áll over India in celebration of *Annakut,* Krishna's legendary supporting of an entire mountain on one playful finger. Noblemen and officials of the state pay official homage to the Maharaja of Benares on this day. Simple folk go to wonder at the miraculous mountain of food and take away a bit of it to keep until the next year. One grain of rice from the *Annakut* is supposed to keep away any illness or evil in the coming year.

It is permissible to consume food after it has been offered to Vishnu. Unlike Shiva, Vishnu is not considered to have been an ascetic in his life. He was, therefore, in a sense, less pure, closer to being human. The food he is fed

at his altars, whether it is raw (such as coconuts and fruits) or cooked (such as rice balls and confections), may be distributed freely to anyone after he has partaken of it.

Shiva, however, is believed to have been an ascetic—highly spiritual and far removed from humanity in his spiritual potency, even though he married and had two children according to the holy books. When Shiva is fed at his altar, an attendant draws a heavy curtain to afford him the privacy dear to almost all Indians when they eat. The remains of his cooked food, unlike those of Vishnu's, are seldom distributed. They are considered too ominously potent to be consumed by mere mortals.

Shiva's consort has many aspects, and in one of them she is Annapurna, goddess of food and abundance. Although Shiva is all-powerful, his power derives from her generosity, as we see in a beautiful old Sanskrit saying:

He [Shiva] is five-faced himself.
Of his two sons, one has six faces [Skanda Kartikeya]
And the other is elephant-faced [Ganesh].

He himself is without apparel [an ascetic].
How could he live, and maintain himself,
If Annapurna were not in his house?

The relationship governing men and gods is both reciprocal and complementary, even where food is concerned. Man feeds and cares for his deities; they feed and care for him. The body sustains the spirit; the spirit sustains the body.

With the coming of Buddha in the sixth century B.C., meat-eating of any sort was severely discouraged. The Buddha's reasons were both pragmatic and spiritual:

The animal whose flesh is eaten may have been one's intimate relation.
Butchers sometimes use flesh of unclean animals such as dogs.

A nonvegetarian sees horrible dreams.
Flesh is produced from the semen of the male and the blood of the female; hence it is impure.
Meat-eating causes obstruction in the acquisition of learning.
Meat-eating is characteristic of the uncultured person.

—*Lankavatara Sutra, fourth century* A.D.

After the Buddha, diverse movements, both social and religious, gradually culminated in an orthodox Hindu society which today is largely vegetarian out of the sincere belief that spiritual progress is impaired by meat-eating. Benares is a supremely orthodox city, and for the majority of its inhabitants, the Maharaja included, nourishment is strictly vegetarian. Besides the spiritual reasons, there are excellent practical reasons for abstaining from eating meat in India's hot summer climate. Meat is difficult to preserve during the heat of May and June; vegetables are much less likely to spoil, and are much lighter to digest. Where summer heat is not prevalent, however, the rules vary somewhat. Brahmins are universally known as vegetarians; but in the cool climate of the Vale of Kashmir they eat mutton, and in Bengal, where many rivers flow through a lush land, fish are caught fresh every day and the Brahmins eat fish with no stain on their caste purity.

In addition to these differences among Brahmins, there are also varying degrees of vegetarianism: some will eat eggs, but no meat, fowl, or fish; others will not eat vegetables such as onions, because they resemble the human head; some refuse tomatoes and beets, because they are the colour of blood; others go so far as to eat only milk products, certain fruit, grains, and leaf vegetables—they feel that eating vegetables such as potatoes or onions is immoral, since by uprooting the tuber you take its life.

India is blessed with a profusion of vegetarian delicacies: pumpkin, eggplant, plantains, coconuts, watermelons,

turmeric, ginger, limes, ground nuts, sugar cane, and dozens of others unknown to the West. The holy Ganges has provided Benares with a thick layer of magnificent soil that produces vegetables of legendary taste and quality. The culinary skill of Benares' cooks has taken these vegetables and created a cuisine so satisfying that meat is never missed on the menu. The two recipes that follow are specifically designed to be just that satisfying:

Benarasi Cauliflower

(Benarasi Gobi)

One hour before serving, preheat oven to 350° F.

Purée all ingredients in this section in the blender. Set aside next to stove.

1½ *cups coarsely chopped onion*
2 *tsp. powdered coriander*
¼ *tsp. turmeric*
½–1 *tsp. ground hot red chili pepper (to taste)*
1 *tsp. salt*
½ *cup tinned whole peeled tomatoes (without additional flavourings) and ½ cup of their liquid*

1 *large cauliflower*
5 *Tbs. clarified butter*

Trim leaves and stalk from cauliflower and divide into bite-size flowerets. Divide these into two portions. In medium-sized, over-proof casserole, heat the butter and fry one portion at a time until each floweret is lightly browned. Remove to a plate and set aside. (Retain any butter that they shed.)

½ *tsp. cumin seed*
¼ *tsp. caraway seed*
¼ *tsp. black peppercorns*
2 *cloves*

Off heat, stir reserved blender purée into remaining butter. Return to medium-low heat and cook, partially covered, until purée is reduced to a thick, moist sauce (about 10 minutes). Stir continuously for the last few

minutes to prevent sticking. Set aside off heat. Pulverize all ingredients in this section in blender. Fold into the sauce with reserved cauliflower until each piece is coated. Cover and bake in preheated oven for 15 minutes (cauliflower still crunchy) to 30 minutes (cauliflower completely tender) . Serve very hot.

seeds of 2 cardamom pods
1 *bay leaf*

SERVES 4–6

Chick-Pea Pasta
(Panolia)

Spread a 3-foot length of aluminium foil on a counter convenient to the stove. In a heavy, medium-sized saucepan, mix together all ingredients in this section. Stir in ½ cup water and blend until smooth. Place over medium heat and stir in 1½ cups more water. Continue stirring constantly for 10 minutes.

1 *cup chick-pea flour (besan)*
¾ *tsp. salt*
pinch turmeric
½ *tsp. cumin seed*

Take off heat and drop one drop of this thickened batter onto the foil. If it can be picked up without leaving a trace on the paper, the batter is ready. If not, continue stirring over medium heat and try every 30 seconds until it is ready.

Then work very quickly. Spread the batter over the entire paper with a wooden spatula or cake-frosting knife. It should be just thick enough to cover the paper without holes. (If it sits even a minute before spreading, it will not spread.) Leave to cool for 30 minutes. It should feel slightly moist, smooth, and rubbery and should come away from the paper without sticking. It will not keep in this state unless thoroughly aired and dried.

Roll the entire length of cooled batter as tightly as possible (like a jelly roll) . Cut this roll into 1-inch sections and stick each with a toothpick. In a small saucepan or skillet, heat butter almost to smoking (keep a lid close by) . Tip pan and toss mustard seed, ginger, and turmeric into the collected oil. Cover immediately and take off heat. After

TO SERVE
2 *Tbs. clarified butter*
¼ *tsp. mustard seed*
1 *tsp. scraped and julienned ginger root*
pinch turmeric

Ascetic followers of Lord Shiva prepare their simple evening meal.

1 *Tbs. minced fresh coriander (cilantro), or* 1 *Tbs. minced parsley*

SERVES 6

vegetable oil for deep frying
¼–½ tsp. ground hot red chili pepper (to taste)

SERVES 8–10

30 seconds, uncover and fold in the rolled sections and coriander leaf. Coat thoroughly and serve very hot.

Serve as side dish.

Or

Cut the cooled batter into ½-inch squares. Deep fry until they puff and become crisp. Drain, toss in chili, lime, and salt to taste and serve hot or cold.

Serve as snack.

Note: It is possible to grind one's chick-peas in the blender and make flour. This is quite successful for most dishes but does not seem to be fine enough for *panolia* so it is best to use commercial flour, which can usually be found at health-food stores.

learning
lofty houses
icy water and saffron

things that even in heaven
are difficult to find
are common here

Fourteen

Kashmir

Kashmir is a garden of eternal spring or an iron fort to a palace of kings, a delightful flower-bed, and a heart-expanding heritage for dervishes. Its pleasant meads and enchanting cascades are beyond all description. There are running streams and fountains beyond count. Wherever the eye reaches, there are verdure and running water. The red rose, the violet, and the narcissus grow of themselves; in the fields, there are all kinds of flowers and all sorts of sweet-scented herbs—more than can be calculated. In the soul-enchanting spring, the hills and plains are filled with blossoms; the gates, the walls, the courts, the roofs are lighted up by torches of banquet-adorning tulips.

—*Tuzuk-i-Jehangir*
(Memoirs of the Mughal Emperor Jehangir),
seventeenth century

"Banquet-adorning tulips . . ." Food is never far from the mind of any Mughal Emperor; and Jehangir is no exception. The exquisite red rice of the Kashmir valley, the green walnuts, the almonds, the fruits . . . nowhere else in India could the Mughals find such fruits, reminders of their ancestral homeland to the northwest. Continuing his memoirs, Jehangir records a pleasant afternoon passed in one of Kashmir's beautiful gardens. He passed it in eating one hundred and fifty cherries: "One can eat more of them than of other fruits."

For centuries before Jehangir, a succession of other conquerors also reveled in Kashmir's bounty. Afghan, Turk, Mongol, Indian Hindu—they all left their mark on the cuisine; and the valley provided for every taste. Every

summer, sheep and goats from the Himalayan foothills took shelter from the heat in high mountain pastures. The meat of these animals and their milk, butter, and yogurt are unsurpassed in flavour. Kashmir's butchers became experts in transforming that meat into an endless array of tastes and textures. A number of these butchers, who were also excellent cooks, would form a group called a *waz.* These groups were Kashmir's caterers *par excellence,* preparing banquets of up to a hundred dishes for weddings and special parties. They would even cook on the elaborate houseboats that dotted Kashmir's lakes, taking lotus root, water chestnuts, and myriad fish, fresh from the limpid waters.

The mountains were full of fowl and game. Such delights as these solaced every painful step of the arduous journey into the valley. It took the Mughal entourage up to three weeks to make the trip from the flat, hot Indian plains. At the pinnacle of the pass there lived a cannibal giant who terrified all pilgrims. But even he could be seduced by the sacrifice of a goat. No one could resist Kashmiri food!

Once the pass had been negotiated, there lay the enchanted valley. Alexander the Great's troops were said to have broken ranks and abandoned all discipline when they swept down into this valley, driven mad by the heady fragrance of saffron fields in autumn.

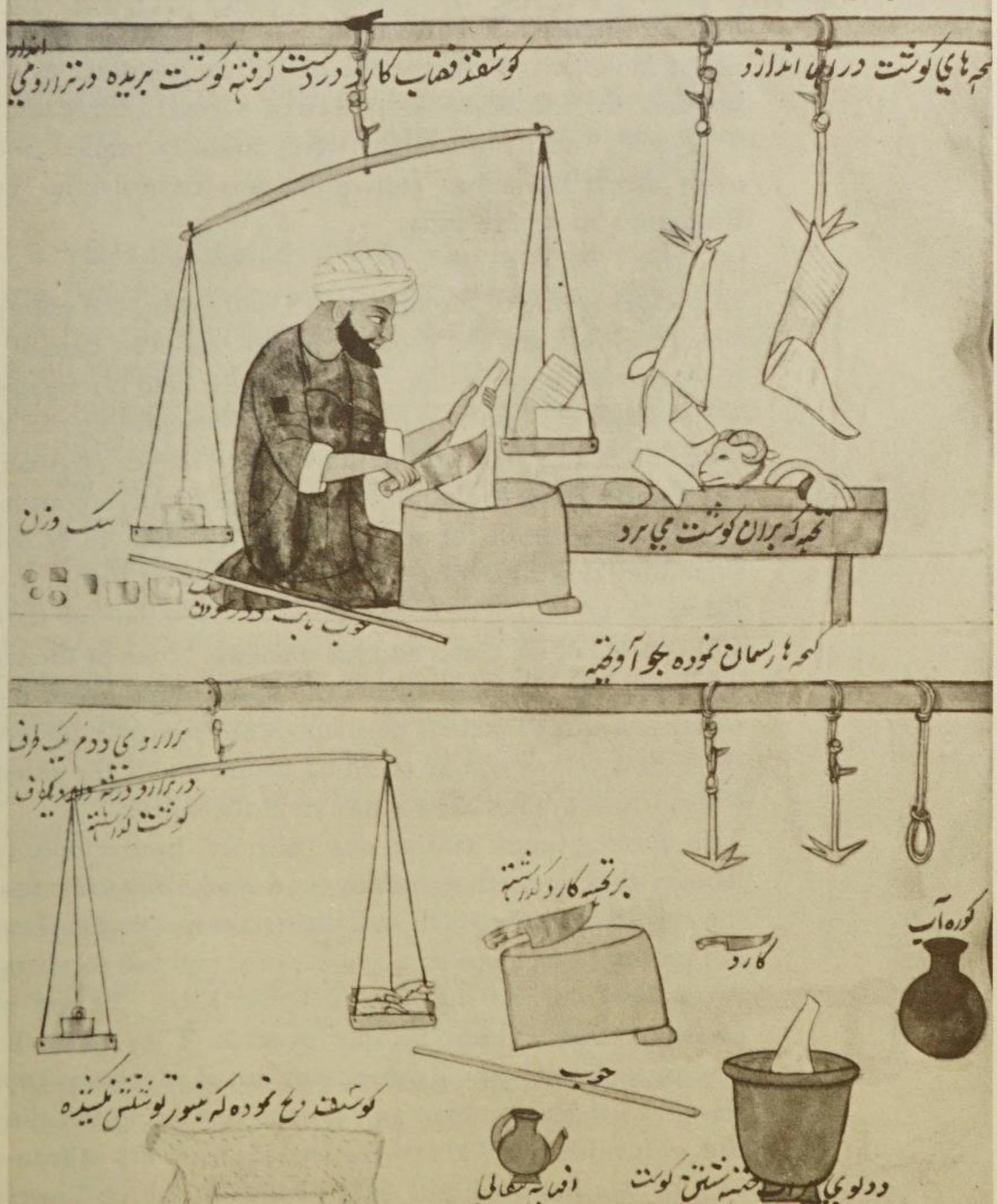
Saffron

Wise men who are familiar with the forefathers of our words say that the name "Kashmir" is descended from *kasmira* or perhaps *kasmiraja*—the very meaning of which is saffron.

Everyone knows that saffron came to Kashmir long ago in the time of the great Hindu king, Lalitayaditya. At that time there lived in the kingdom a sacred snake whose eye was badly infected by the poisonous vapours issuing from his own fiery mouth. In desperation, the snake sought relief

Kashmiri meat is bled from the throat, or halalled, in accordance with the Muslim religion.

تشبیه کوشفند قصاب که بر دوکان نشسته گوشت میفروشد و نباب نوشته می‌آید



from a poor physician who lived in the humble town of Pampur. When the physician cured him, the snake gratefully bestowed upon Pampur the very first saffron bulb; and there it has flourished ever since.

When Akbar, the great Mughal Emperor, ruled Kashmir, he claimed the cultivation of these fields as an imperial monopoly. Even the use of saffron fragrance as an unguent for the beard was declared a royal prerogative. The fields during this time were carefully tended and every aspect of saffron cultivation was recorded in the Emperor's book of records:

> In the beginning of the month of Urdibihisht, the saffron seeds are put into the ground, which has been carefully prepared and rendered soft. After this, the field is irrigated with rainwater. The seed itself is a bulb resembling garlic. The flower appears in the middle of the month of Aban; the plant is about a quarter of a yard long; but, according to the difference of the soil in which it stands, there are sometimes two-thirds of it above, and sometimes two-thirds below the ground. The flower stands on the top of the stalk and consists of six petals and six stamens. Three of the six petals have a fresh lilac colour, and stand round about the remaining three petals. The stamens are similarly placed, three of a yellow colour standing round about the other three, which are red. The latter yield the saffron.
>
> In former times, saffron was collected by compulsory labour; they pressed men daily, and made them separate the saffron from the petals and the stamens, and gave them salt instead of wages. A man who cleaned two *pals* receiving two *pals* of salt. At the time of Ghazi Khan, the son of Chak, another custom became general. They gave the workmen eleven *tarks* of saffron flowers, of which one *tark* was given them as wages; and for the remaining ten they had to furnish two Akbarshahi *sers* of clean, dry saffron—i.e., for one hundred and sixty pounds of saffron flowers they had to furnish four pounds of cleaned saffron. This

custom, however, was abolished by His Majesty on his third visit to Kashmir; to the great relief of the people.

When the bulb has been put into the ground, it will produce flowers for six years, provided the soil be annually softened. For the first two years, the flowers will grow sparingly; but in the third year the plant reaches its state of perfection. After six years, the bulbs must be taken out; else they get rotten. They plant them again on some other place; and leave the old ground uncultivated for five years.

—Ain-i-Akbar

It is said that Emperor Akbar once sent for a criminal from India in order to test his innocence. When the wretch arrived in Kashmir, he was made to eat one *tola* (about one-half cup) of saffron threads, which, taken in such quantities, was sure to be deadliest poison. But the man survived his ordeal and was duly pardoned and set free; for only an innocent man could have survived such a strong and deadly dose of poison.

Pure saffron can lend its colour to seven hundred thousand times its own weight in water without losing the marvellous hue of its threads. Those who partake of it are protected from headaches and other maladies. No serious disease has ever prevailed around Pampur. There the people dance in the moonlight when the first flowers appear in the chill of October and while picking they sing fondly:

Towards Pampur went away my darling;
Saffron threads caught him in fragrant embrace.

Oh, he is there, and, ah me! I am here!
When, where, O God, would I see his face?

And when the saffron is all harvested and ready for delivery to the state contractor, they sing sadly, to its beauty:

How pink is saffron's colour!
We are bathed in sweat, piling it up.

Soon, too soon, it will be hurried to the city.
Enjoy its glorious view, O Samad.
How pink is saffron's colour!

Though saffron threads look delicate and innocent, they can be almost offensive if too obviously present in a dish. Ideally saffron should add colour, richness, and fullness—but with only a breath of its own distinct flavour. It will surrender this richness to the fullest if powdered in a small mortar and then soaked in hot water. But the beauties of saffron are shy of overcooking; it must be added to a dish only shortly before serving, as in this savoury blend of spinach and tripe.

Tripe with Saffron
(Methi Maz)

1 *lb. honeycomb tripe*

Clean the meat thoroughly. Boil it in well-salted water, skimming occasionally, until completely tender. (Tripe that is not precooked will take 3–4 hours.) Reserve tripe broth separately. Remove tripe and scrape off excess spongy lining if necessary. Cut the remaining tripe into very small bits.

1 *tsp. minced onion*
1 *tsp. minced garlic*
½ *tsp. caraway seed*
¼ *tsp. ground black pepper*
½ *tsp. powdered cardamom*
½ *tsp. powdered cinnamon*
½–1 *tsp. ground hot red pepper* (*to taste*)

Add all the ingredients in this section into the blender with ¼ cup reserved broth and grind to a fine paste. Reserve next to stove.

In a heavy, medium-sized saucepan, heat the butter and fry the onions until just browning. Add in the blender mixture and continue frying. Stir and turn constantly with a spatula until the raw smell of spices disappears and butter bubbles up through the spice paste.

Stir in the tripe and black pepper. Pour over it ¼ cup broth. Cover and simmer over very low heat.

Meanwhile, crumble the saffron threads with the fingers into a small cup. Pour over them 1 Tbs. hot water and leave to soak. Drain the spinach leaves thoroughly. Chop fine. Heat the butter in a large skillet and fry the spinach until it is quite crisp. Pour butter, spinach, and saffron with its soaking water into the simmering meat. Mix thoroughly. Stir in the fenugreek leaf if desired. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes. Serve over plain, white rice to absorb the rich sauce.

⅓ cup clarified butter
1 *cup onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices*

reserved minced tripe
1 *tsp. coarsely ground black pepper*
reserved broth

½ tsp. saffron threads
2 *lbs. spinach, picked and washed under cold water*
½ cup clarified butter
1½ *Tbs. dried fenugreek leaf* (methi) (*optional*)

SERVES 4 GENEROUSLY

Spring Lamb Snack

(Kashmiri Tubbak Maz)

Twice a year the Muslim majority in Kashmir celebrates the festival of Id. One of these festivals falls not long after the annual spring lambing. Perhaps the Prophet planned it so; for *Tubbak Maz* is a favourite dish at Id banquets, and the recipe calls for ribs of young spring lambs. The butcher—his cutting knife held with his toes—will sell what he calls "two-teeth lamb"—that is, lambs so young that it has only two milk teeth—the ideal age for Tubbak Maz. The flavour of turmeric permeates these tender ribs during long, slow cooking, one of the few dishes in which turmeric is used for its flavour as well as for its colour. Crisp frying then transforms these ribs into a perfect light lunch or *hors d'oeuvre*.

کوتۀ بکری
در دازه بکری
زن بکری حاتی
های شتر سر سر دارد
سگ نگهبان کوتۀ
حرخ
گاو نیش را بکری تری کرده
مرد بکری به گاو دس کشته
اسیاهم سوان نگاهی
فالت مال سر

Place the ribs in a large pot, cutting them only enough to accommodate the pot. Cover with water. Bring to boil. Skim and add all the remaining ingredients in this section. Continue to cook over medium heat until the bones are soft and rubbery. This can take up to 3½ hours, depending upon the age of the lamb. Leave the ribs in their broth until just before frying to absorb maximum flavour.

2 *lbs. breast ribs of a very young, milk-fed spring lamb. Fat should not be removed and ribs should not be separated*
4 *large garlic buds, whole*
10 *cardamom seeds, slightly crushed*
2 *tsp. salt*
2 *Tbs. turmeric*

Thirty minutes before serving, preheat oven to warm.

Line a serving platter or dish with paper towelling. Cut the precooked meat into individual ribs and pat thoroughly dry. Pour oil to cover a depth of 2 inches in a small skillet and heat almost to smoking. Carefully drop into the oil as many ribs as the skillet will accommodate. Fry until brown and quite crisp.

clarified butter or oil for frying

Remove to the serving plate to drain and keep warm in preheated oven until all the chops have been fried. Serve as quickly as possible and recommend chewing on the bones as well. Sprinkle with salt just before serving.

SERVES 6–8 AS A SNACK, 4 AS A MAIN COURSE

Note: These little ribs freeze very successfully after they have been boiled. Simply defrost, pat thoroughly dry, and fry before serving.

Reserve the broth in which the ribs cook; it is excellent for cooking rice or lentils and will keep for some time, as it forms a gelatin.

Four things are nectar: milky food,
a fire in chilly weather,
an honour granted by the King,
and loved ones, come together.
—Kashmiri proverb

Milky Meat
(Aab Gosht)

A buffalo's milk is sugar sweet;
man's wife is a garland for his neck."
Proverb of northern India)

This proverb, like this dish, might well have come from the Gujars, hereditary goatherds of Kashmir. Each summer they drive their flocks to the high mountain pastures, mocking the heat of the plains. Moving from place to place with their stately beasts, fierce dogs, and queer patchwork tents, they provide the valley's nomadic dairy and, from time to time, its meat. Their clarified butter is sent down to the towns in skins, and occasionally yogurt as well. But they never send milk; it goes to their young and to the pot for this succulent meat.

1 *lb. lamb, cut into 3-inch pieces*
4 *cardamom pods, slightly crushed*
2 *whole garlic buds, slightly crushed*
3 *inches of cinnamon stick*
1 *tsp. salt*
8 *peppercorns*

Place the meat in a heavy, medium-sized saucepan and cover with approximately 4 cups water. Bring to boil and skim. Add all the remaining ingredients in this section and boil uncovered until the meat is tender. The water should be reduced to about 1 cup. If not, remove the meat and reduce the liquid to 1 cup.

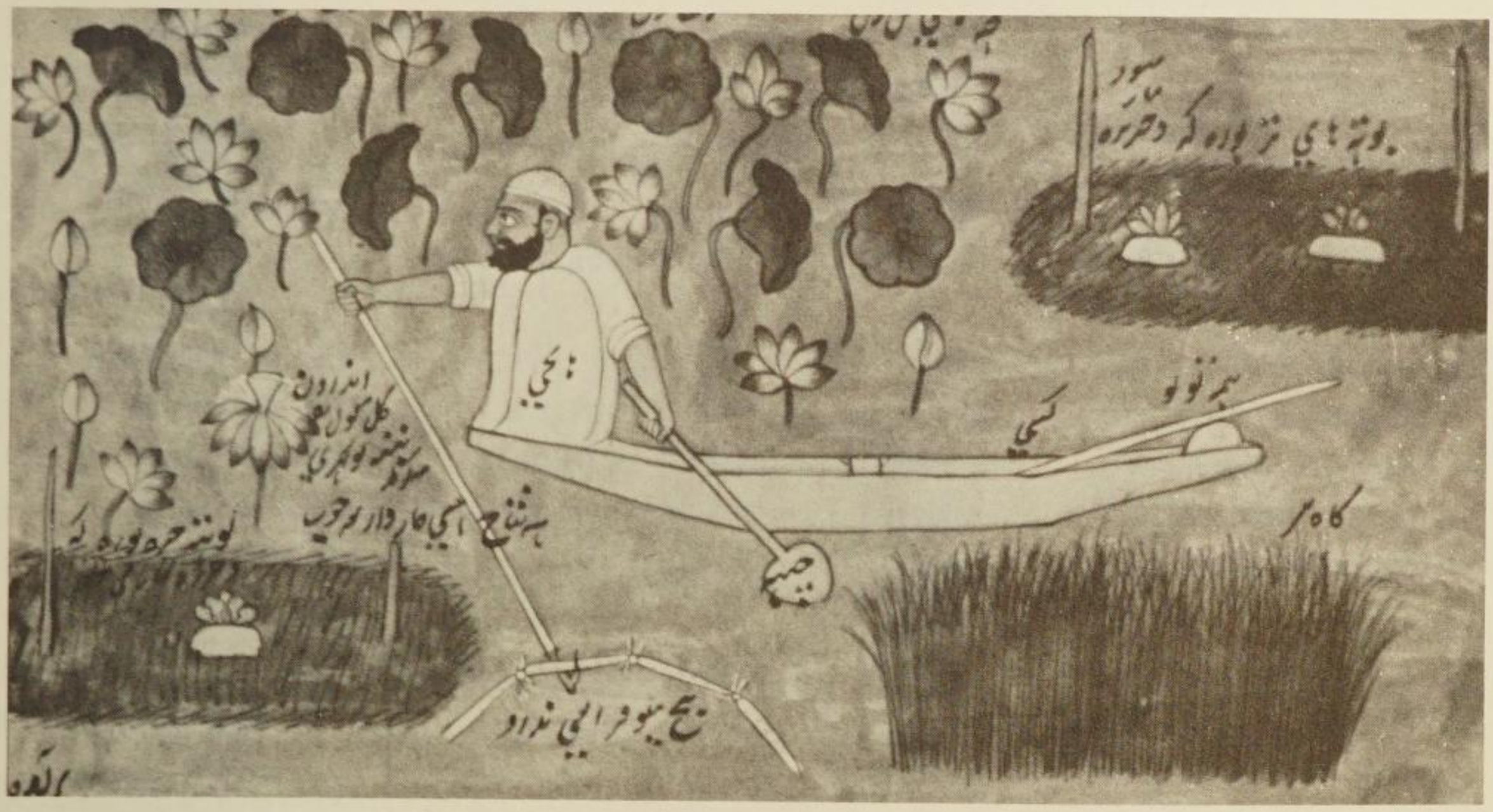
4 *cups whole milk*
8 *cardamom pods, slightly crushed*
4 *inches of cinnamon stick*
1 *tsp. salt*

Meanwhile, in a separate saucepan boil and stir the milk uncovered over high heat with cardamom, cinnamon, and salt until it is reduced to 2 cups.

¼ *tsp. powdered ginger*
¼ *cup whole blanched almonds, unsalted*
½ *cup whipping cream*

When both broth and milk are reduced to the required amount, begin to stir the broth into the milk very slowly. Add the meat and the ginger and simmer stirring for 10 minutes. Purée the almonds and cream in the blender. Just before serving, add this purée. Heat through. Serve with white rice.

SERVES 4



Harvesting vegetables grown on Kashmir's ingenious floating gardens.

O fisherman, to you the fish are as a field of wheat . . .

—Kashmiri fishing song

Feet-First Fish
(Kashmiri Macchi)

Kashmiri fishermen have a peculiar method of catching the fish in their rivers. In spring when the water is only chest high, they will launch two long, slender boats and proceed with them touching, nose to nose. Two men pole from the aft portion of the boat, keeping the sterns well apart. In the midst of the triangle formed by these boats, ten or twelve stout fishermen wade down the river. Each time someone's foot detects a frightened fish, he plunges under to catch it. One of his fellows stands on him to help him stay under the water. With luck the fisherman surfaces and the fish is cooked for dinner.

The Kashmiri method of eating fish may seem unusual as well, since after cooking it they let it cool and serve it at room temperature. If you have never eaten cold fish, you

may be a bit uncertain at the idea. But try it—it's quite good!

2 *lbs. whole white, fresh-water fish, cleaned but with head and tail left intact*

At least 3 hours before you plan to serve, wash the fish under cold, running water. Pat dry and rub inside and out with flour and fennel. Set aside.

½ *cup chick-pea or all-purpose flour*
1 *Tbs. ground sweet fennel (optional)*

Preheat oven to 350° F.

½ *cup chopped onion*
2 *Tbs. peeled garlic buds*
½–1 *tsp. ground hot red pepper (to taste)*
½ *tsp. turmeric*
2 *tsp. powdered coriander*

Add all the ingredients in this section into the blender. Blend and scrape with ½ cup water until they are reduced to a fine paste. Set aside next to stove.

6 *Tbs. clarified butter or oil*

In a small skillet or saucepan, heat the butter. Stir into it the contents of the blender jar. Quickly pour 1 cup water into the empty jar and blend to loosen the remaining paste. Keep this water next to the stove. Fry the spicy paste over medium heat, stirring and turning with a spatula. Add 1 Tbs. water from the blender jar whenever necessary to prevent sticking. Continue until the paste moves as a single mass when stirred and the butter bubbles through it to the top (15–20 minutes) . Take off heat.

½ *cup whipping cream*
1 *Tbs. scraped and minced ginger root*
2 *Tbs. blanched, unsalted almonds*
3 *Tbs. minced onion*
½ *tsp. powdered cumin*

Discard any water remaining in the blender. Pour in the cooked paste. Add all the ingredients in this section. Blend and scrape until the mixture is reduced to a fine paste. Reserve in blender jar.

Wash the reserved fish to remove all flour and fennel seeds. Pat dry. Stuff into its cavity all the contents of the blender. Sew the cavity with heavy thread and rub the outside of the fish with a bit of butter or oil. Place it on the rack of a roasting pan in the middle of the preheated oven. As it browns prepare the basting sauce.

Blend all the ingredients in this section in a small bowl. Fill a bulb baster with this sauce and insert in through the fish's mouth into the cavity. Repeat at 10-minute intervals. (This allows time for the sauce to be absorbed.) Just before removing the fish from the oven, funnel the drippings caught in a roasting pan into its cavity.

2 cups unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with fork
2 Tbs. white vinegar
½ cup fresh lime juice
2 tsp. salt

The fish will take approximately 20–25 minutes to cook. Midway through cooking it should be carefully turned to the other side. Test for doneness by pressing its flank lightly with a finger. When it feels tender, the fish can be served immediately, but will have a much more interesting flavour if allowed to cool as long as possible and served at room temperature on a bed of steaming rice.

SERVES 4

Water-Chestnut Snack
(Singarde Tale Hue)

While fishermen prowl the lakes in their long skiffs, quieter folk laze about in the reeds, tucked in tiny wooden boats. They are the water-chestnut gatherers, harvesting their floating gardens in the silent backwaters of the lakes. Cucumber and melons, tomatoes and lotus drift about on aquatic beds. An ugly duckling, water chestnut, hides its knobby gray form among them. Lotus is the beauty with its lovely head; its reed is firewood, its stalk like meat. But poor water chestnut, before it is peeled, is a sad sight to behold. Thorns protrude in all directions, concealing the crisp, white heart—a heart that grows in such rich profusion that it once fed all Kashmir in a famine. In times of plenty, it still proves a good snack, either raw or fried quickly and lightly dusted with spices, as in this easy recipe:

water chestnuts, fresh if possible
oil for frying
one part salt
one part powdered cumin
one-half part turmeric
one-quarter part ground hot red pepper

Rinse the water chestnuts and pat them thoroughly dry with a towel. Heat just enough oil to cover the bottom of a small skillet and fry the water chestnuts until they are golden but not yet crisp (2–3 minutes). Remove and drain. Mix the spices to taste, ½ tsp. salt for 1 cup chestnuts. Toss all together and serve hot.

Coriander Korma
(Dhaniyawal Korma)

The coriander leaf in the last step of this recipe is harmless and gentle as the lotus; but if you feel frightened by its strangeness or amount, remember this Kashmiri story:

The elephant feels afraid of the lotus, though he dearly loves its delicacies. "It might quickly hit me with its bees," he says. "It might assail me with its leaves. . . . Moreover, it might bind me with its threads. . . ."

And so he is prevented from uprooting it, as he is bewildered by fear.

What good his enormous limbs?

3 lbs. lamb, cut in 2-inch cubes (with the bone and fat if desired)
2 cups minced onion
2 tsp. salt
½ tsp. powdered cardamom
½ tsp. powdered cinnamon
2 tsp. powdered ginger
2 cups unflavoured yogurt
⅔ cup clarified butter
2 large garlic cloves, slightly crushed

Combine all the ingredients in this section and cover them with water in a heavy pot. Partially cover and boil over medium heat until the liquid is almost completely reduced and the meat is very tender. (Add water by half cupfuls, if the meat is slow to tenderize.)

Purée almonds and milk together in blender. Add to the pot when the meat is quite tender and the butter bubbles up through the sauce.

Just before serving, add the cream and coriander leaf. Heat through.

Serve with steaming hot rice.

⅔ cup blanched, unsalted almonds
½ cup whole milk
1 cup whipping cream
1 cup finely chopped coriander leaf (cilantro). Parsley can be substituted, with a great difference in taste.

SERVES 6–8

A boy as big as an eggplant has a tummy as big as a courtyard.

—Kashmiri proverb

Pungent Eggplant
(Khatta Bangan)

In a medium-sized saucepan, heat the oil and fry the eggplant until soft inside, crisp and wrinkled outside. Remove with a slotted spatula and reserve on paper towels.

Drop the clove into the remaining oil. When it begins to sputter, drop in the onion and garlic and stir them until they are just golden. Remove from heat. Mix together all the remaining ingredients in this section and stir them in. Return to heat. Continue to stir and fry gently until the mixture begins to stick.

½ lb. eggplant, cut into large chunks, unpeeled
⅔ cup vegetable oil
1 clove
½ cup onion, minced
½ tsp. minced garlic
1 tsp. ground hot red pepper
1 tsp. turmeric
¼ tsp. ground black pepper
½ tsp. powdered ginger
¼ tsp. powdered cinnamon
¼ tsp. powdered cardamom
1½ tsp. salt
1 Tbs. sugar
¼ cup unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with fork

1½ *cups ripe tomatoes, peeled and chopped fine*

When the spice mixture begins to stick on the bottom, add the tomatoes. Stir occasionally over very low heat until tomatoes have disintegrated. (Add a little water, if necessary, to prevent sticking.) Then stir in the reserved eggplant pieces and 1 cup water. Cover and simmer till completely tender (about 15 minutes).

3–4 *tsp. red vinegar*
or
¼ *cup tamarind pulp, soaked for ½ hour in ¼ cup hot water*

Just before serving, add the strained tamarind water or red vinegar.

For a lighter version of this dish, add 2 Tbs. of yogurt to the finished dish and purée it in the blender.

SERVES 4

Serve as an accompaniment to plain white rice.

Corn and Walnuts
(Makki Akroat)

Vegetables from my own garden are equal to pullao from another man's house.

—Kashmiri proverb

½ *cup clarified butter or vegetable oil*

In a 12-inch wok or medium-sized skillet heat the butter until a haze forms on the top. Toss in all the remaining ingredients in this section. Reduce the heat. Fry and turn mixture until the nuts are golden and the corn just tender.

3 *cups corn kernels, freshly scraped or frozen*
¾ *cup slivered blanched, unsalted almonds*
¾ *cup slivered, unsalted walnut meats, green if possible*

1–2 *Tbs. seeded and minced fresh, green chili peppers*
¼ *cup minced fresh coriander leaf (cilantro), or ¼ cup minced parsley*
fresh lime juice to taste
½ *tsp. salt*

Sprinkle the remaining ingredients over the corn just befor serving. Toss and serve immediately.

SERVES 4

Rice from the Foothills
(Chawal Kardi)

Though Kashmir has known rulers from many, many lands, her present princes are almost natives of the valley. For the last hundred years and more, Kashmir has been ruled by Dogras, a royal family that hails from the Himalayan foothills. There is nomadic blood in the veins of these princes, such that even this fairest of mountain kingdoms could never entice them to settle there permanently. Their winters were spent in palaces south, nestled against the cold in their native foothills, leaving the majestic palace that commands the Kashmir valley to remain silent and empty until the first signs of spring.

But when at last he came back to the mountain valley of Kashmir, the Maharaja was every bit as splendid as spring. Seated in his magnificent yellow barge, he came slowly up the river that winds through the city and entered the lovely mirror lake that reflected his palace on the hill. Trailing in his wake were the boats of the entourage—among them His Highness's cooks. The Dogra dishes they prepared—three are to follow—are quite different from Kashmiri food.

In a heavy, medium-sized saucepan, heat the oil almost to smoking. Keep the lid close by. Toss in the fenugreek seeds. Cover immediately and shake the pot over the fire until the seeds are black. Take off heat. Mix together the rice, ginger, turmeric, and salt. Add ¼ cup water and stir into the pot. Return to heat and continue stirring until the rice and spices are well browned.

½ cup mustard oil or vegetable oil
2 tsp. fenugreek seed or cumin seed
1½ cups white, long-grain rice (not precooked)
1 Tbs. scraped and grated ginger root, or ¾ tsp. powdered ginger
1½ tsp. turmeric
2 tsp. salt

Being careful of the steam, pour the hot water over the rice and simmer uncovered until all liquid is absorbed. Do not stir. Carefully fold in the yogurt and chilis with a fork and continue to simmer until the yogurt is fully absorbed. Stir as little as possible to avoid mushy rice.

2 cups boiling water
2 cups unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with fork
2–4 fresh, green chili peppers, seeded and minced

Fresh lime juice to taste

SERVES 6

Just before serving, sprinkle with lime juice. Tastes best with plain grilled meat.

Lentils for a Song

(Dogra Dal)

Rice without lentils is like a carpenter without a song.
—Kashmiri proverb

Lentils are so indispensable to the Indian diet that they are regarded as actual friends. Each one of the many, many types has a special pet name, such as "the little girl with brown eyes" or "the boy who wears a yellow coat." Aside from being cheap, these tiny little beans are filling and nourishing. Prepared as a vegetable, they add an interesting texture to a simple meal of greens and rice.

1½ cups moong dal
3 baby onions, peeled
1 tsp. ground hot red chili pepper
2 red chili peppers, seeded and whole (each about 1½ inches long)
1 inch of cinnamon stick
5 cardamom pods, crushed
1 tsp. turmeric
1 tsp. cumin
2 tsp. salt
4 cups rich brown stock or bouillon

Wash the lentils under cold running water until the water runs clear. In a medium-sized saucepan, combine all the ingredients in this section. Cover and simmer over medium heat for about 20 minutes without stirring. Then open and check tenderness and saltiness of the lentils. Add water or salt as necessary and continue cooking until the lentils are completely tender, but still intact. There should be very little liquid left. Discard chili peppers, cardamom pods, and cinnamon stick.

⅓ cup clarified butter
3 Tbs. minced onion
1½ tsp. minced garlic
1½ tsp. scraped and minced ginger root
2½ Tbs. finely chopped fresh coriander leaf (optional)

SERVES 4–6

In a very small saucepan, heat the butter to crackling. Toss in the onions. One minute later, add all remaining ingredients in this section. Pour immediately into the beans. Stir with a fork and serve hot with rice or as a separate vegetable in small individual bowls.

Pomegranate Meat

(Kala Maz)

Long, long ago a king of Kashmir, tired from hunting alone in the beautiful forests, stopped at the gate of a humble fruit garden to rest. Not knowing who he was, the old gardener called to his daughter to bring a cup of pomegranate juice for the stranger. At once she brought it, carefully covered over with tender leaves so that their guest might not harm himself by drinking too quickly while his brow was still moist from the hunt. The whole cup, she told him, had been filled by the juice of but one of her father's fine pomegranates. The King thanked his fair hostess and begged her to fetch another cup. Passing the time until her return, he inquired of the old gardener the amount of his revenues and the tax levied on his fruit trees. The King was very surprised to learn that there was no such tax and began thinking to himself the quickest possible way of tapping these vast resources. He was still calculating when at last the girl returned, bearing but a half cup of juice. The King was astonished; but the poor girl protested that, try as she might, she could not obtain any more juice, though she had pressed six of the largest pomegranates. "The blessing of produce," said her old father quietly, "depends upon the good will of the King. It occurs to me that you must be a king. At the time when you inquired of me the income from the garden, your disposition must have changed. Consequently the blessing passed away from the fruit."

The King was silent for a moment, seemingly deep in thought. Then his face cleared and, embracing the old man, he asked for another cup of juice. This time it was brought to him quickly, spilling over at the brim. The fruit tax was never levied.

Place cloves, fenugreek seeds, and cardamom on a saucer next to the stove. Heat the oil in a heavy, medium-sized casserole or pot until it smokes. Drop in the spices and immediately cover the pot. Shake it back and forth for a few seconds. Open lid slightly and toss in meat and salt. Close and shake over high heat for 5 minutes. The meat should

½ cup mustard oil, or vegetable oil
3 cloves
2 tsp. fenugreek seeds
3 cardamom pods, slightly crushed

2 *lbs. lean mutton or lamb, preferably shoulder or leg, cut into 2-inch cubes*
1 *tsp. salt*

be brown and all its liquid evaporated. Uncover and remove the whole spices.

1 *tsp. scraped and minced ginger root, or* ¼ *tsp. powdered ginger*
1 *tsp. minced garlic*
1 *bay leaf*
½ *cup onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices*
1–1½ *cups pomegranate juice, bottled or made fresh in blender (not tinned)*

Add ginger, garlic, and bay leaf to the meat pot. Stir and simmer for 5 minutes. Tip pot to collect the oil on one side and fry the onions in this. When they are golden, begin to add the juice ¼ cup at a time. (Beware of steam.) Continue adding ¼ cup juice each time meat is on point of sticking. Stir and turn constantly with spatula. When juice is used up, meat should be rich brown and almost tender.

Preheat oven to 300° F.

¼ *tsp. powdered cumin*
1–2 *tsp. ground hot red pepper (to taste)*
1 *tsp. turmeric*
½ *cup unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with fork*
1 *tsp. dark brown sugar*

Mix the cumin, pepper, and turmeric with enough water to moisten. Tip the pot and add them into the oil. Fry thus for a moment, then mix well into the meat. Add yogurt and brown sugar and cook uncovered until tender. (Add more yogurt or water as necessary to tenderize.) Stir to avoid burning as the liquid evaporates.

1 *tsp. minced fresh coriander leaf (cilantro), or* 1 *tsp. minced parsley*
1 *tsp. fresh mint, minced (or* ¼ *tsp. dried)*
fresh lime juice to taste (about 2 *Tbs.)*

Cover and place in preheated oven for 30 minutes. Just before serving, garnish with fresh coriander, mint, and lime juice to taste. (Dry mint should be soaked beforehand.)

SERVES 4

Serve with white rice and a light, green salad.

This is one of the most unusual and delicious of Kashmir's recipes; but memories of its aromatic spices linger in the air long after the cook has gone to bed. It is best, therefore, to prepare this dish well in advance, so that both cook and kitchen may refresh themselves before the guests arrive. It will get even better as it waits.

Fifteen

Delhi

Arriving at a certain village, he prayed an old woman to give him something to eat. The old woman gave him a dish filled quite full, and he, being very hungry, thrust his hand deep into the platter, thereby burning himself. Blowing on his hand and shaking it about, he said the dish was very hot. The old woman laughed heartily and at the same time taught him a good lesson, saying: "You are like Timur-i-lang, who did not know how to take this country; for he came right into the middle of it, and had to go out again defeated. If he had begun by attacking the confines, he could, in time, have made himself master of the whole. It is the same with you, who have just tried to begin in the middle, while if you had travelled round the edge, you would have eaten the whole without once burning yourself."

—Babur Namah

The old lady had a good listener. Her guest went on to finish his platter without incident; and then he virtually conquered a subcontinent. The gentleman was Babur, princeling of the Transoxianian steppes, descendent of Genghis Khan *and* Timur-i-lang—Tamerlane—and founder of a dynasty.

Babur did not actually conquer a subcontinent. He gained a foothold in the north of India which his descendents were able to expand into a fine and fancy empire, encompassing at one time almost the whole of the Indian subcontinent. In the process, they left their unmistakable, regal imprint upon that land and so influenced its cuisine that today it is difficult to find a "pure" Indian dish. Certain enclaves in the far south harbour perhaps the only cuisine that is completely free of the richness—the almonds, cream, luscious fruits, and rich pulaos—that the Mughals brought from their northern homelands.

What they did for Indian cuisine is essentially what they did for many aspects of life in India: they embellished it. What had been simple became sumptuous; what had been sumptuous became splendid—and all with great style and

taste. Excess, in those days, was still a long way from being bad taste. On the contrary, the greater the status of the individual, the more he was expected to consume, and nowhere was this more conspicuous than at the table.

It is the custom of the court, when the king is to march the next day, that at ten o'clock of the night, the royal kitchen should start. It consists of fifty camels loaded with supplies, and fifty well-fed cows to give milk. Also there are sent dainties in charge of cooks, from each one of whom the preparation of only one dish is required. For this department there is an official of standing, whose business it is to send in the dishes sealed up in bags of Malacca Velvet, et cetera, and two hundred culles, each one with his basket of chinaware and other articles; further, there are fifty camels carrying one hundred cases packed with sarapa (robes of honour) : also thirty elephants loaded with special arms and jewels to be distributed among the generals, captains, et cetera, et cetera.

—Niccolo Manucci

"Cooks of the throne served so much food that the caravans of hunger took leave of the country of Hindustan." (Gul Badam Begum's memoirs, fifteenth century.)

Wherever a Mughal Emperor went, there was always an official water bearer by his side. One such fellow saved the life of his emperor by floating him on the inflated water-bearing skins when he floundered in a river. The water in those skins was usually of no ordinary extraction. To a Mughal there were really only two drinkable waters: that of the *zam zam* well at Mecca (which must be poured down the throat of a dying man to "facilitate exit of the vital spark") ; and that of the sacred Ganges River, holy to Hindus and a Muslim delight:

> His Majesty calls this "the water of immortality" and has committed the care of this department to proper persons. He does not drink much, but pays much attention to this matter. Both at home and on travels, he drinks Ganges water. Some trustworthy persons are stationed on the banks

The art of cooling water was highly developed in the Indian plains, where ice and snow were unknown. An illustration from the Nimat Namah.

of that river, who dispatch the water in sealed jars.

For the cooking of the food, rainwater or water taken from the Jumna or the Chanab is used, mixed with a little Ganges water. On journeys and hunting parties, His Majesty, from his predilection for good water, appoints experienced men as water-tasters.

—The *Abdar Dhana* from the *Ain-I-Akbar*,
sixteenth century

Most of the other Mughal Emperors shared Akbar's interest in excellent waters; but their concern with liquid refreshment did not stop there. There was wine as well—wine in abundance, wine to the extent that at least three of Babur's descendents found "the dust of calamity settling upon the skirt of their lives" and "rode the highway to anonymity" on express account of the grape. Babur himself made the grand gesture of breaking up all his golden wine cups and distributing them to the poor, in an attempt to escape such a fate (he switched to little "confections" of opium). Likewise, his descendant, Emperor Shah Jehan, made the gesture (simply sneaking a drink thereafter whenever the Empress wasn't looking). In general, evasion of the grape was to no avail:

Wine is a raging enemy, a prudent friend.
A little is an antidote; but much a witch's poison.
In much there is no little injury, in little there is
much profit.

—Shah Jehan
(on the occasion of his son's first draught)

In little, there was indeed much profit—of another sort. For, in time, the drinking of wine was prohibited in the Mughal realm (except for Christians and elephants, whose "courage it increased"); and the illicit making of any brew became a gold mine. Ultimately, licenses were granted to Europeans in the kingdom (it was felt they could not survive without it); and the problem was neatly solved.

Chick-Pea Pullao
(Channe ka Pullao)

One of the favourite foods of the Emperor Akbar, who, like the Hindus, did not care for meat, was the chick-pea (we know it in its dried state as the garbanzo bean) which is so popular in India that the following story is told about it:

Many, many years ago—long before the Mughal came to the land—chick-pea grew tired of his great popularity among the other beings. "All the people and all the animals in this world desire to eat me," he said. "Am I never to have any peace for myself? I shall go to heaven and beg protection from the god who looks after plants and animals. He will give me justice." And so the little chick-pea presented himself humbly to the god and began to complain of his fate. But in the midst of his speech, the god, who looked highly upset and uncomfortable, interrupted the little pea. "Little chick-pea," he said, "I am extremely sorry but you must leave quickly now. I am feeling very hungry and you look so delicious. . . ."

And so the poor little pea went back and became a part of the following recipe—which must have been one of Akbar's favourites. Surely the cream and saffron are embellishments that none but a Mughal could have added. Take pity on the chick-pea, if you like, and substitute the ordinary green garden pea for results that are equally delicious.

2 lbs. fresh green peas in the pod, or 2 lbs. fresh, green chick-peas

Wash and shell the peas (should make about 2 cups peas). Reserve 3 cups pods, coarsely chopped. Grind them in blender with 2½ cups water. Set blender jar next to stove.

⅛ tsp. saffron threads
1 Tbs. rose-water

Crumble saffron threads into a large measuring pitcher. Muddle with the rose-water until the threads disappear.

½ cup milk
¼ cup cream
¼ tsp. powdered cardamom
⅛ tsp. powdered cloves
2 tsp. salt

Stir in all remaining ingredients in this section and set pitcher next to stove.

Preheat oven to 350° F.

In a heavy, medium-sized, oven-proof casserole that can be lidded, heat butter over medium heat and sauté shelled peas with all ingredients in this section until the rice becomes khaki colour. Stir and turn constantly with spatula.

5 Tbs. clarified butter
2 cups white, long-grain rice (not precooked)
½ Tbs. scraped and julienned ginger root
¼ cup blanched, unsalted almonds
1 tsp. cumin seed

Strain blender liquid into the rice, pressing pulp to squeeze out all liquid. (Beware of steam.) Discard pulp.

Continue to simmer rice uncovered over medium heat until it just begins to stick on the bottom. Pour in reserved saffron milk and quickly bring to a boil. Cover the casserole with foil, crimping edges to seal. Put lid firmly in place and transfer casserole to middle of preheated oven for 20 minutes. Open it at the table. (It will hold for 1–2 hours in warm oven if 1 Tbs. clarified butter is added just before serving.)

Serve with a light meat dish. SERVES 6

With the exception of Akbar, few Mughals were vegetarians. They thrived, in fact, on meat. Even Akbar's book of records, the most complete of any left by the dynasty, lists thirty recipes for "cooked victuals": ten in which no meat is used, ten of meats with spice, and ten in which meat, rice, etcetera, are used. These dishes of meat and rice were called, as a group, "pullaos"; and they were one of the Mughal's greatest contributions to Indian cuisine. An English traveller who visited the Mughal court in Delhi in 1673 took note of their popularity: "The most admired dainty wherewith they stuff themselves to the Throat is pullao, whereof they fill themselves to the Throat and receive no hurt, it being so well prepared for the Stomach."

Tandoori Game Hens

(Tandoori Murgh)

This is an excellent example of a recipe employing techniques that had been used for centuries in India but were perfected by the Mughals. Baked in a large, bullet-shaped clay oven at very high heat, these birds take on the rosy glow of the fire and the tenderness of a slow marinade.

2 *Cornish game hens, 1 lb. each*
1 *tsp. salt*
2 *Tbs. fresh lemon juice*

Twenty-four hours before serving, wash and dry birds. Make two shallow incisions over each breast and each leg. Dissolve salt in lemon juice and rub all over birds, inside and out. Set aside to marinate for 30 minutes.

1 *tsp. caraway seed*
2 *tsp. coriander seed, or 1 tsp. powdered coriander*
1 *tsp. minced garlic*
2 *tsp. scraped and minced ginger root, or* ½ *tsp. powdered ginger*
2 *Tbs. fresh lime juice, or lemon juice*
2 *Tbs. cider vinegar*
2 *Tbs. cooking oil*
1 *Tbs. minced green papaya, or* 1 *Tbs. minced dried apricot*
¼ *cup unflavoured yogurt*
½–1 *tsp. ground hot red chili pepper (to taste)*

Meanwhile, pulverize the caraway and coriander seeds in the blender. Add all remaining ingredients in this section and blend to a smooth, thin sauce. Place the birds in a bowl just large enough to hold them. Pour over the blender sauce and turn the birds in it until they are thoroughly coated, especially in the cavities and incisions. Cover the bowl tightly and leave the birds to marinate for 12 hours unrefrigerated or 24 hours refrigerated.

1 *tsp. cumin seed*
½ *tsp. salt*
1 *Tbs. fresh lime or lemon juice*
1 *Tbs. clarified butter, melted*
½ *tsp. powdered dried green mango* (amchur) *(optional)*

Forty minutes before serving preheat broiler to medium high and place birds, with the sauce that adheres to them, on the rack of a roasting pan. (Discard any excess sauce.) When the broiler is heated, grill the birds for 7½ minutes, each side. Turn only once, basting with the drippings at that time. Meanwhile, roast the cumin seeds in an ungreased skillet until they are dark and fragrant. Pulverize them and mix with all remaining ingredients in this section. Baste the grilled birds with this mixture and return

to grill for 5–10 minutes or until the leg moves easily in its socket.

1 *tsp. powdered dried fenugreek leaves* (methi) (*optional*)

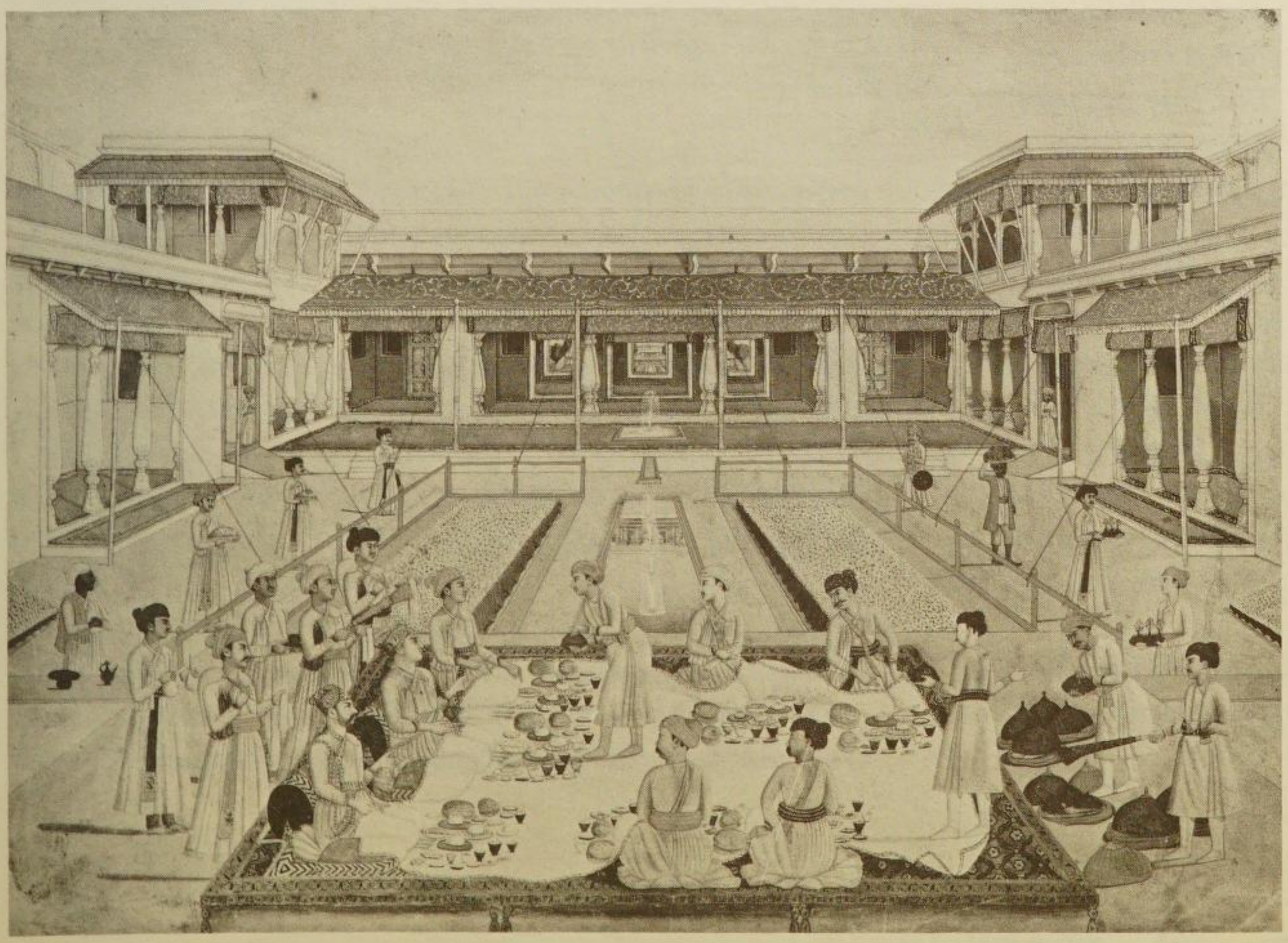
SERVES 2 GENEROUSLY, 4 WITH RICE AND VEGETABLE

Lucknow Kababs

(Seekh Kababs)

The making of kababs is another art brought to perfection by the Mughals. Of the myriad varieties that existed, this Lucknow Kabab is perhaps the most refined. Its origins are lost in the steppes far north of India, but it has come to rest today in the north central city of Lucknow. Lucknow, as the former Princely State of Oudh, faded many years ago; but Lucknow city, as a repository of Mughal tradition, still remains the center of Muslim India. It is a city so steeped

"No one had ever seen such food since the Cook of Divine Contrivance had placed the hot dish of the Sun on the Table of the Heavens." (Gul Badam Begum's memoirs, fifteenth century.)



in Mughal grandeur that Lucknow families of noble descent still serve a dish that is said to have been sampled by the Emperor Akbar himself. And they mean that literally. When Akbar tasted of the dish in the sixteenth century, a bit was saved by his noble host. That bit was added to the pot the next time the same dish was prepared; and so on down the centuries with no end in sight. Although the same claim cannot be made for this kabab, it does come from the Lucknow tradition, and, as the most elegant of the many varieties, it must certainly have been a favourite of the Mughals.

7 cloves, or 1/4 tsp. powdered cloves
4 inches of cinnamon stick, or 1 1/2 tsp. powdered cinnamon
2 large bay leaves
1 tsp. seeds of cardamom pods, or 2 tsp. powdered cardamom
1 Tbs. caraway seed, or 4 tsp. powdered caraway
1 tsp. black peppercorns, or 2 tsp. ground black pepper
4 1/2 tsp. poppy seed
1 Tbs. salt
1/4 tsp. nutmeg
1/8 tsp. powdered mace
1/2–1 tsp. ground hot red chili pepper (to taste)

Powder all ingredients in this section, adding them into the blender one by one in the order listed. Use as many whole spices as possible in this recipe; the flavour will reward you. Leave them in the blender when they are ground.

1/4 cup clarified butter
1/3 cup evenly chopped onion

In a small skillet, heat butter to crackling. Tip skillet and fry onions in collected butter until they are brown and crisp. Remove, drain, and crumble into blender. Reserve

butter for basting. Add ginger and chick-pea flour and grind all contents of blender to a fine paste with ½ cup water.

¼ cup scraped and minced ginger root
2½ Tbs. dry roasted chick-pea flour

In a large mixing bowl, knead together the lamb, onion, and blender paste until they are thoroughly blended. At this point, the meat can be held for up to two days in the refrigerator or frozen for up to two months.

2 lbs. lamb, ground twice
⅓ cup minced onion

Thirty minutes before serving, preheat oven to broil. Moisten the palms with water and take 2 Tbs. of meat between them. Roll and pat it into a finger-shaped sausage, about 4 inches long and ½ inch thick. Make about 3 dozen sausages in this manner. Place them on the rack of a broiler 5 inches under the flame. Turn and broil for 10–15 minutes or until they are cooked through and slightly crisp. (They should not be rare.) Alternatively, grill 5 inches over white coals, basting with the reserved butter. Garnish with coriander leaf and wedges of lime and serve very hot.

¼ cup minced fresh coriander leaf (cilantro), or ¼ cup minced parsley
wedges of lime

MAKES ABOUT 3 DOZEN KABABS

Breakfast of Shah Jehan
(Bahadur Shahi Roti)

Kababs, since they never contain any starch—rice, potatoes, or bread—were most often eaten as a snack or in conjunction with a heavier meal that did contain one of the starches so essential to the customary diet. One might find them at tea, for example, or even at a sumptuous breakfast. The same is true for this delicate saffron bread, nicknamed —with tongue in cheek—Breakfast of Shah Jehan. The traveller Niccolo Manucci gives an explanation: "The intimacy of Shah Jehan with the wives of Ja'fer Khan and Khalilullah Khan (two of his chief noblemen) was so notorious that when they went to court the mendicants called out in loud voices to Ja'fer Khan's wife, 'O Breakfast of Shah Jehan! Remember me!' And when the wife of Khalilullah Khan went by they shouted, 'O Luncheon of Shah Jehan! Suc-

cour us!' The women heard, and without taking it as an insult, ordered alms to be given."

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Line a small loaf pan (approximately 10 inches by 4 inches) with wax paper.

¼ tsp. saffron threads
2½ Tbs. whipping cream
¼ tsp. powdered cinnamon
¼ tsp. powdered cardamom
½ cup unsalted butter, melted

Crumble the saffron into a cup. Muddle it in the cream, then stir in cinnamon and cardamom. Stir in melted butter and set aside.

¾ cup all-purpose flour
¼ tsp. baking powder

Sift flour and baking powder together into small bowl. Set aside.

whites of 4 large eggs
½ cup sugar

In a large mixing bowl, beat whites until they fluff but do not peak. Begin to beat in the sugar, 2 Tbs. at a time, until the whites stand in soft peaks. Gently fold in one-fourth of the saffron cream, then one-fourth of the flour. Alternate thus until everything is folded in. Pour into the lined baking pan and bake in middle of preheated oven for 30 minutes. Serve hot for breakfast or tea.

SERVES 6–8

Date Delight
(Khajur ka Halwa)

The date palm is another tree. . . . Its branches grow from just one place at its top; its leaves grow on both sides of the branches from neck to tip; its trunk is rough and ill coloured; its fruit is like a bunch of grapes, but much larger. People say that the date palm among vegetables resembles an animal in two respects; one is that, if an animal's head be cut off, it dries up; the other is that, as the offspring of animals are not produced without the male, so too with the date palm. It gives no good fruit unless a branch of the male tree be brought into touch with the

female tree. The truth of this last matter is not known (to me) .

The above-mentioned head of the date palm is called its cheese. The tree so grows that where its leaves come out they are cheese white, and become green as they lengthen. This white part, the so-called cheese, is tolerable eating, not bad, much like the walnut. People make a wound in the cheese, and into this wound insert a leaf; in such a way that all liquid flowing from the wound runs down it. The tip of the leaflet is set over the mouth of a pot suspended to the tree in such a way that it collects whatever liquor is yielded by the wound. This liquor is rather pleasant if drunk at once; if drunk after two or three days, people say that it is quite exhilarating.

Once when I had gone to visit Bari, and made an excursion to the villages on the bank of the Chambal River, we met in with people collecting this date liquor in the valley bottom. A good deal was drunk; no hilarity was felt. Much must be drunk, seemingly, to produce a little hilarity.

—Memoirs of the Mughal Emperor Babur, sixteenth century

Only a little of this exquisite date dessert is necessary for much hilarity.

Seed dates if necessary. Grind in blender, adding only enough water to reduce to a smooth, thick paste.

1 *lb. dates, seedless if possible*

In a small skillet, warm the butter over medium heat. Add ground dates. Knead the butter into this paste with spatula, pressing and turning until the paste is lightly browned.

1–1½ *cups clarified butter (according to richness desired)*

Off heat, stir in milk and all remaining ingredients. Return to heat until mixture is hot and about the lightness and consistency of tapioca pudding. Taste for sweetness.

1 *cup whole milk, hot*
¼ *cup seedless raisins, soaked in water*
1 *Tbs. toasted unsalted almonds, slivered*

1 *Tbs. toasted unsalted pistachios, slivered*
1–2 *Tbs. sugar (to taste)*
pinch saffron, muddled in 1 *Tbs. hot water (optional)*

wedges of fresh lemon or lime

Serve in small, heated individual bowls, garnished with lime.

SERVES 6

Twenty-Four-Carat Toast
(Shahi Tukere)

This is a dessert for children of all ages; a dessert of non-Indian extraction. Scratch its impeccable saffron-gold exterior and what do you find but stale bread! Nowhere in the annals of Muslim cuisine is there any record of such a thing as leavened bread of this type. Muslim bread is most often flat and very thin. Could it be that some visitor in the past presented His Highness with French toast? And that His Imperial Highness improved upon that toast in the same way that another Mughal Emperor once embellished a new English carriage? This carriage, presented to the Mughal Court by England's proud ambassador, boasted the finest that England could offer—silver spokes and plush seats. But the Emperor found it slightly wanting and ordered some imperial changes. The result—the carriage was entirely dismantled and reassembled by his expert craftsmen. Every nail and nut and bolt was replaced with a solid gold one and the English plush upholstery was entirely re-covered with the richest golden Indian brocade. Ordinary toast undergoes a comparable transformation in this recipe.

3 cups water
1 cup sugar
pinch saffron

Bring sugar and water to boil in medium-sized saucepan. Stir until sugar dissolves. Continue boiling for 5 minutes or until syrup spins a single fine thread between thumb and forefinger. Muddle saffron in 1 Tbs. hot water and add to syrup. Reserve off heat next to stove.

In a small skillet, heat the butter to crackling. Fry the bread, a few pieces at a time, until golden and crisped through. (Adjust heat to prevent burning.) As each piece is crisped, remove it to the skillet of milk. Do not place one piece upon another. Leave the toast to soak until all pieces are saturated. Drain off excess milk. Pour reserved sugar syrup over the toast without moving it in the skillet.

Place skillet over medium-high heat and cook uncovered until all liquid has evaporated. (Adjust heat to prevent burning.) Carefully slide toast onto serving plates. Sprinkle with cardamom and nuts. Serve very hot.

½ cup clarified butter
4 thick slices stale white French bread, halved
1 cup whole milk, poured into a medium-sized skillet

½ tsp. powdered cardamom
2 tsp. unsalted pistachios, chopped fine

SERVES 4

Shah Jehan's Last Stew

(Shah Jehani Korma)

Aurangzeb, the last of the great Mughal rulers of Delhi, dethroned and imprisoned his father, Shah Jehan, in a crumbling fort in Agra. Shah Jehan's jewels, his women, and his food were gradually denied him by his son until, at last, he was forced to choose one single type of legume for his diet. This time the poor old emperor, who had little left to comfort him but a view of his beloved Taj Mahal, for once outwitted his cruel son. He chose as his legume the tiny chick-pea, the most versatile legume of all. Served as a vegetable, fresh or dried, or as a soup, simmered and puréed, the chick-pea is excellent fare. Powdered into flour, it will thicken or bind to make delicate breads and desserts. In this exquisite meat dish, named for Shah Jehan himself, the chick-pea appears as a flour, binding together the marinade spices for its light cinnamon-saffron sauce. The Maharaja of Sailana has brought this recipe to perfection.

Four hours before cooking, pour the yogurt into a large strainer lined with a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth and place over a bowl to drip. (About 2 cups waterless yogurt will be required.)

6 cups unflavoured yogurt

10 *cloves, or* ½ *tsp. powdered cloves*
6 *inches of cinnamon stick, or* ½ *tsp. powdered cinnamon*
5–8 *whole dried red chili peppers, seeded (to taste)*
seeds of 9 *cardamom pods, or* ½ *tsp. powdered cardamom*
4½ *tsp. poppy seed*
¼ *tsp. mace blades*
⅛ *tsp. nutmeg*
½ *tsp. powdered cumin*
½ *tsp. ground black pepper*
¾ *tsp. turmeric*
1 *Tbs. salt*
2½ *Tbs. chick-pea flour*
1½ *Tbs. blanched unsalted almonds*
1½ *Tbs. blanched, unsalted pistachio nuts*

Meanwhile, measure all the spices in this section into separate piles on a plate. One by one, drop them into the moving blender, pulverizing each completely before dropping in the next.

2 *tsp. scraped and minced ginger root, or* ½ *tsp. powdered ginger*
½ *cup dried apricots, coarsely chopped with a greased knife*
1 *Tbs. grated, unsweetened coconut*

When these dry spices are ground, leave them in the blender and repeat the same process with all the ingredients in this section. Reduce the whole to a smooth paste with ¼ cup water, scraping the sides as necessary. Stir the waterless yogurt into this paste and mix thoroughly.

2 *lbs. lean, boneless lamb, cut into* 2*-inch cubes*

In a large bowl, mix the meat and blender paste until each piece is thoroughly coated. Cover and leave to marinate for at least 3 hours at room temperature (6 in the refrigerator).

One and one-half hours before serving, preheat oven to 350° F.

Heat the butter in a heavy, medium-sized, oven-proof casserole that can be tightly lidded. Fry the onions until golden brown and just crisping. Stir in the meat and marinade and saffron water. Cover the casserole with foil, crimping the edges to seal. Cover this tightly with the lid and place in the preheated oven. Bake for 1 hour or until meat is completely tender.

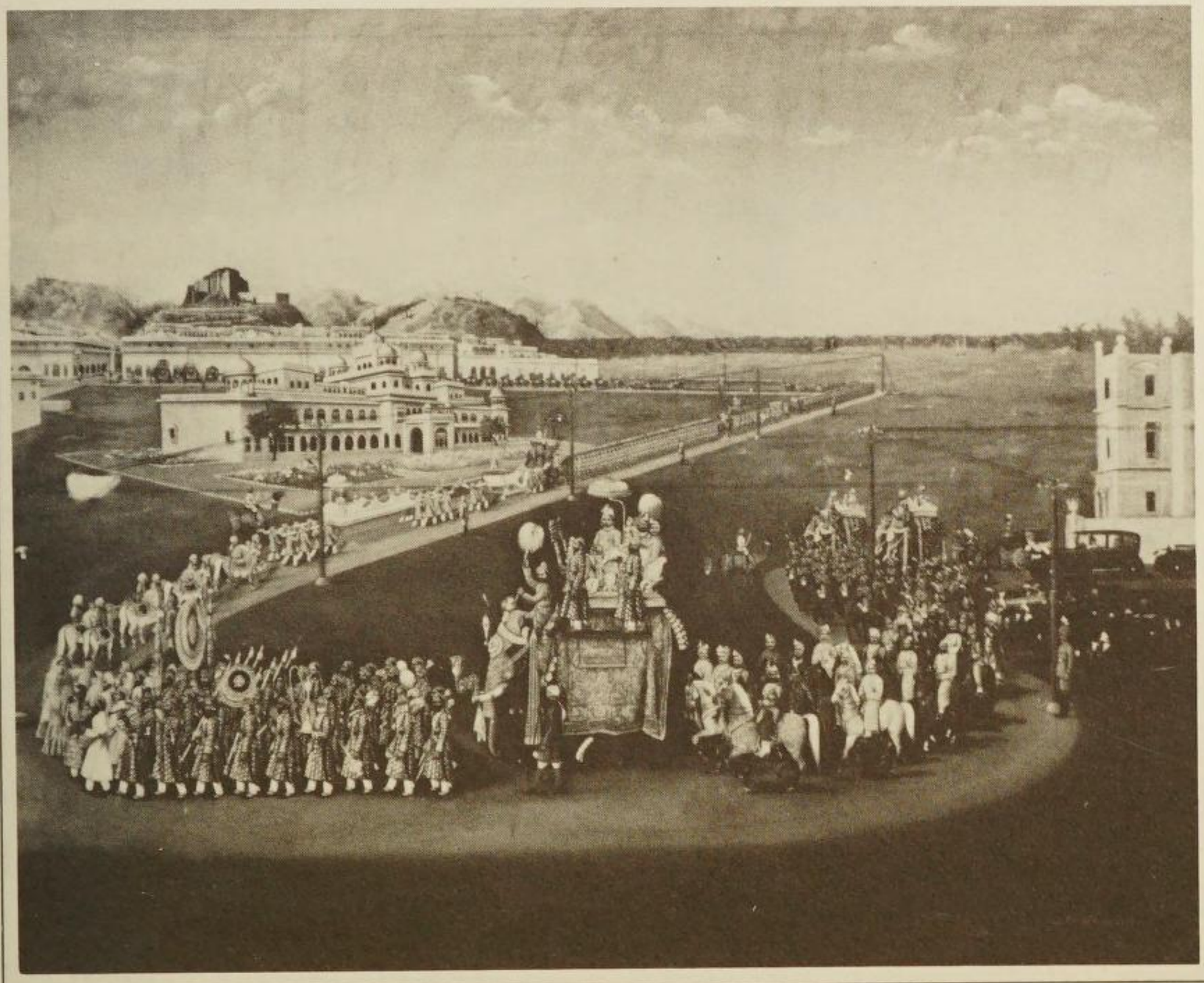
Garnish with coriander leaf and serve very hot, or transfer to a new casserole and serve between two layers of plain, white steamed rice.

Serve with a light vegetable.

1 *cup clarified butter*
1 *cup onion, cut in half from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices*
¼ *tsp. saffron threads, powdered in a small bowl with the back of a spoon and soaked in* 1 *tsp. hot water*
3 *Tbs. finely chopped fresh coriander leaf (cilantro) (optional)*

SERVES 4–6

Part IV



SOUTH INDIA

Overleaf: The Maharaja of Rewa proceeding
to fetch his bride, accompanied
by neighbouring rulers.

He bethought himself:
Here now are worlds and world guardians,
Let me create food for them.

He brooded upon the waters.
From them when they had been brooded upon,
a material form was produced.
Verily, that material form which was produced,
Verily, that is food.

—Aitareya Upanishad

A finger run around the borders of South India would certainly taste of the sea—three seas, in fact: the Bay of Bengal, the Sea of Oman, and the Indian Ocean. When the finger, moving from east to west, begins to taste of spices and sea, it has moved into the kingdom of Malabar, now known as Travancore-Cochin. Here begins the South of legendary fame, of Columbus and Marco Polo. Just a bit farther north, the finger turns upward and begins to taste of coffee and tea: Mysore, the gateway of Southwest India, where opulence meets simplicity. Opulence in the Northern Indian sense—heavy garments and heavy food—fades at the southern borders of Mysore State and disappears in Malabar.

Much that is now considered Indian disappears when one reaches the South: Hindustani, the lingua franca of North India, is not readily understood here; clarified butter, wheat, and wheat breads—staple foods north of the Deccan Plateau—give way to coconut oil and rice. The Indian traveller who has come from the North, through Bombay and the Deccan Plateau, is almost as much a stranger here as the Dutch and Portuguese who came by sea.

South India, the oldest India, is almost un-Indian. It has remained apart, a world unto itself, immune to the Mughal influence that changed so much of India. As a result, its dress remains light and simple: clean, white saris for the women, and for the men sarong-like wraps known as *lungis*. Its food

remains, in tune with the climate, astringent and liquid and light, very much dependent on the coconut palm, the rice field, and the tamarind tree.

Although Malabar is essentially a seaside kingdom, laced with lagoons and canals, only the fisher castes eat the giant scampi and frog legs that come from these waters. They are, for the most part, of Arab descent—black-eyed Muslims with smooth skins and white teeth; Hindus refrain from eating fish or meat, by habit and by religious convictions. For them the sea is not a hunting ground, but rather the source of winds and waves: winds that nourish their coconut palms and waves that wash their sandy beaches.

The best known of these beaches, Cape Comorin, is the southernmost tip of South India. Sacred to Hindus for that reason alone, it is also the site of two handsome temples, which rest on tri-coloured sands. There is a story about these temples and about a famous feast that left these sands coloured instead of white:

It seems each of the two temples is inhabited: one by a god, the other by a goddess. Long ago the young god was eager to marry the goddess. Their fellow gods objected, however, insisting she remain a virgin. Selfishly determined to prevent the marriage, they set the god impossible tasks: he must bring as an offering mangoes with no seeds, coconuts without eyes, and other edibles that do not exist. But this he willingly did and more, so great was his desire to wed. So, reluctantly, the gods fixed a date, with a warning to the groom: midnight was the only possible hour at which the wedding would be auspicious.

But when the god ventured out at this appointed hour to cross the sands and claim his hard-won bride, another god, jealous and bold, took the form of a cock and crowed. Sad and disappointed, the bridegroom turned back, thinking the dawn had broken. Somehow he had missed the appointed hour and forfeited his chances of marriage. Thwarted, the bride, in her own seaside temple, fell into towering rage. She ordered that all of her wedding feast should be turned into sand and shells. And that is why the sands of Cape

Comorin, India's southernmost shore, are yellow, red, and black to this day—witness to the uneaten feast.

That is the story; one may believe it or not; but the sands are still red, black, and yellow. And it is said that long, long ago it was truly the gods who ruled Malabar, rather than human kings.

When they were replaced by the earthly kings, it was under an interesting system: once every twelve years, all the people of South India joined in a fabulous banquet, which lasted for days on end. Everyone, including the king, feasted with great abandon; and throughout it all any citizen who pleased might attempt to slay the king and his court. If the king was strong and clever enough to stay alive and maintain his throne, maintain it he did for another twelve years of uncontested, peaceful rule. If, however, he was overthrown, the usurper was duly crowned; and in this way the citizens insured a vigorous and peaceful rule.

No one knows exactly when the ancient customs died away. Today Their Highnesses of Mysore and Malabar (Travancore-Cochin) live in kingdoms full of spices, elephants, coffee, and tea; but they undergo no such traumatic meals as those of their ancestors. They do preside over festivals of fabulous antiquity. Cochin is well known for its annual Punam, a battle of parasols. Two lines of elephants stand face to face while their priest riders compete, displaying a dazzling array of umbrellas, one ensemble after another. Whichever side is judged best by the audience is considered winner for the year.

Even more famous is Mysore's Dassera, when all instruments of state, including elephants, are duly decorated and honoured: horses and carriages, cannons and muskets, thrones, crowns, and precious jewels, but above all, elephants, for without them there is no royalty. *Mansollas,* an ancient text, states very explicitly that, "the might of a king is calculated by the number of elephants he possesses. He is indispensable for state ceremonies as the proper mount of a monarch. His presence in the ruler's household insures abundant rainfall in the kingdom and the fertility of the country. The fluid exuded

from his temples in the fury of his musth is aphrodisiac. . . . The powder made of the ashes of his ivory and mixed with goat's milk is a trusted remedy for baldness . . . ," et cetera.

The text continues for several pages, extolling elephants and their virtues. Nowhere, however, is there any mention of eating an elephant. Imagine, then, the surprise of His Highness, the Maharaja of Mysore, greatest supplier of elephants in India, were he ever to read the passage in Dumas that gives a recipe for elephant foot (*à la française*) and concludes with the comment that, after all, "Indians don't go to all this bother. They are not so well initiated into the mysteries of high-class cooking as we are. They simply wrap the feet in leaves and cook them in hot coals." This, from Mr. Alexandre Dumas, in his *Dictionary of Cuisine* . . .

It is true that many a Mughal ruler made his meal on an elephant—that is, upon an elephant, like the Emperor Jehangir: "swinging through the city upon his elephant, followed by many elephants, on which meat was being cooked, or wine and drinking cups, bread, a supply of pickles and small boxes of fruit were carried. . . ." No mention of elephant stew. On the contrary, the elephant himself in India fared well when it came to cuisine: attended by his own personal retinue of ten men, the Emperor's elephant was fed, in Mughal days, on "flour, rice, meat, butter, fine spices, and thirty pounds of sugar . . ." daily!

He probably eats as well in Mysore, even to this day, excluding, that is, the meat course; His Highness is a strict vegetarian. Like most of his subjects, and most of South India, his preference is for true "curry" (*kardi*), generously laced with yogurt, turmeric, and mustard seed. The dishes that he eats from golden cups vary little from those of his people, eaten—as they have been—for centuries on the traditional banana leaf.

He who has not eaten, seeks the leaf
And he who has, the sleeping mat.
—Proverb of South India

Long, long ago, there was nothing on the shore of the sea except flour for bread. Whoever wanted to eat could go to the seashore, get as much flour as he needed, bake bread for himself, and eat it. But the rule was that you could take only as much flour as you needed. You were not to carry away even a pinch more than was necessary or to store up sacks of flour in your house to use later. . . .

One day a woman thought to herself, Why should I go through all this trouble day after day? Why shouldn't I go and bring home a lot of flour for bread? So, on that day she went to the seashore and brought back enough flour to last her four days. When she had used it all up, she went down to the sea again. She wanted to take home some more flour to bake bread. But there was no sign of any flour anywhere. She had broken the rule. So there was no flour left for anybody to eat and the seashore was all sand, sand and nothing else.

—Indian Folk Tale

Sixteen

Travancore-Cochin

And that is how the west coast of Travancore came to be a long sandy beach and how all the people of that lovely kingdom came to base their diet on rice. It was already so when Marco Polo came to visit, centuries ago. He marvelled at the fields of emerald-green rice shoots, and even more at the rice-eaters. Some of them, ascetics who ate only rice and milk, lived to be two hundred years old (though, it must be admitted that they supplemented this diet with a tonic of quicksilver and sulphur). "Their bodies remained so active that they could still come and go as they will and perform all the services required by their monastery and their idols. . . ."

These idols, Marco Polo marvelled, they rubbed with sesame oil to darken them to their own skin color, a handsome blend of centuries of sun, laced with the blood of Arab and Jew. Arab and Jew are still there, intermingled with Hindu and Syrian Christian. They still wear the fine, light, loose-fitting wraps that so impressed Marco Polo and

they still chew the betel and areca nut that darken their lips and teeth. Even the spices are still there, so long the dream of adventurous merchants. In fact, little but the drinking of quicksilver and sulphur has disappeared from this seaside kingdom. Fishermen still fan their nets against the sky, great butterfly wings full of fish; jungles are still thick—though less so now; the towns have grown into one great, long village. Cleanliness remains astonishing among such fertility; both diet and dress are simple, and food is served in bell-metal containers—elegant ellipses and fine, fat braziers—always fragrant with subtle spices and a hint of the nearby sea.

Even more than the sea, it was perhaps the spices that mesmerized visitors:

> We shall tell you next of the great kingdom of Malabar, which has a king and a language all its own. . . . In this kingdom there is great abundance of pepper and also of ginger, besides cinnamon in plenty and other spices, turbit and coconuts. . . . When merchants come here from over-seas they load their ships with brass, which they use as ballast, cloth of gold and silk, sandal, gold, silver, cloves, spikenard, and other such spices. . . . You must know that ships come here from very many parts . . . and goods are exported to many parts.
>
> —*Travels of Marco Polo*

Malabar was rich. Her kings wore jewels beyond any trader's imagination and supervised commerce that was, literally, the incarnation of the West's wildest dreams. Travellers described what they saw in Malabar with a wonder that bordered on awe: the people, their habits, their dress, their religion and, above all, their treasured spices:

> Here groweth the pepper; and it springeth up by a tress or a pole, and is like our ivy berry, but something longer, like the wheat eare; and at the first, the branches are

greene, and as they waxe ripe, they cut them off and dry them. The leafe is much lesser than the ivy leafe and thinner. . . .

—William Porter

What a revelation it must have been, the first taste of that little ivylike berry! One imagines the expression on the traveller's face as it fluctuated between surprise and pleasure—and, even more amusing, the expression on his face when he first tasted of another long pod, a common flavouring agent in South India known as "tamarind," or "Tamar-i-Hind," the dried date of India. Tamarind is notoriously tart: "it hath a very sour taste and by the apothoecries is held good against the Scurvie," wrote an English gentleman in the seventeenth century.

Its other qualities, more subtle, had a much more ancient reputation. Marco Polo reported that when the Malabar corsairs captured merchant vessels, they made the crew "drink tamarind and sea water, so that they pass or vomit up all the contents of their stomachs. Then the corsairs collect all that they have cast up and rummage through it to see if it contains any pearls or precious stones. For the corsairs say that when the merchants are captured they swallow their pearls and other gems to prevent their discovery. That is why they do not scruple to treat them to this drink." And, as if that were not enough, sleeping under a tamarind tree was said to produce a fever and eating its leaves now and then, to improve one's singing voice immensely.

Vindaloo

Put together pepper "when it has waxed ripe" and tamarind (without sea water), and you have two very typical flavours of Malabar cuisine. Add pork, a bit of vinegar, some ginger and spices and you have a South Indian "Vindaloo," one of the most typical nonvegetarian dishes

of this region, which is largely vegetarian. Vindaloo has always been based on pork because of the many wild boar in Malabar jungles. Out of the necessity for preserving this meat, once it had been dressed, was born the spicy pickled meat known as Vindaloo, meaning "without water," since any water in the dish would eventually spoil the pickle. This recipe is a variation of the pickle (which calls for a good deal more oil) . It can be made without the tamarind, which is sometimes difficult to find; but will lack its unique tart appeal and its soothing effect upon Scurvie.

about ½ cup tamarind pulp

Preheat oven to 300° F. Drop tamarind pulp into ¼ cup water to soak.

¼ cup coriander seed
3 tsp. cumin seed
1–2 tsp. black mustard seed, or 1 tsp. prepared mustard powder
8 cloves
16 peppercorns
2 inches of cinnamon stick
2 tsp. sugar

Put all the ingredients in this section into the blender and grind to a fine powder. Set aside.

¾ cup sesame or mustard oil
2 cups onion, cut from top to root, and across the grain into thin, even slices
2 Tbs. slivered garlic
2 lbs. lean pork, trimmed and cut into 2-inch cubes

Heat the oil in a medium-sized, oven-proof casserole (not iron nor aluminium) . Sauté onion and garlic until tender and golden. With a slotted spatula, remove both to a plate and reserve. In the remaining oil, sear the meat over a high flame, a few pieces at a time. Remove to the same side plate. Remove casserole from fire.

2 tsp. fenugreek seed
1–2 tsp. ground hot red pepper (to taste)

Immediately drop fenugreek seeds into the pot. Stir. Drop in red pepper and turmeric. Stir again. Then add all remaining ingredients in this section and stir to mix. Finally

add reserved meat, garlic, and onions. Pour over 4 cups water. Cover and cook over medium heat until meat is tender. Quickly boil off any excess water before proceeding to next step, but beware of overcooking.

Hold a flour sifter over the casserole and sift the blender spices into it. Stir in the vinegar and tamarind water. (Discard pulp after squeezing all its juices into the casserole.) Cover casserole and place in preheated oven for 30 minutes. Oil will separate and can be drained off before serving over hot rice.

1 *tsp. turmeric*
⅓ *cup scraped and julienned ginger root*
2–4 *fresh, green chili peppers, seeded and cut into* 1*-inch slivers*
2 *tsp. salt*

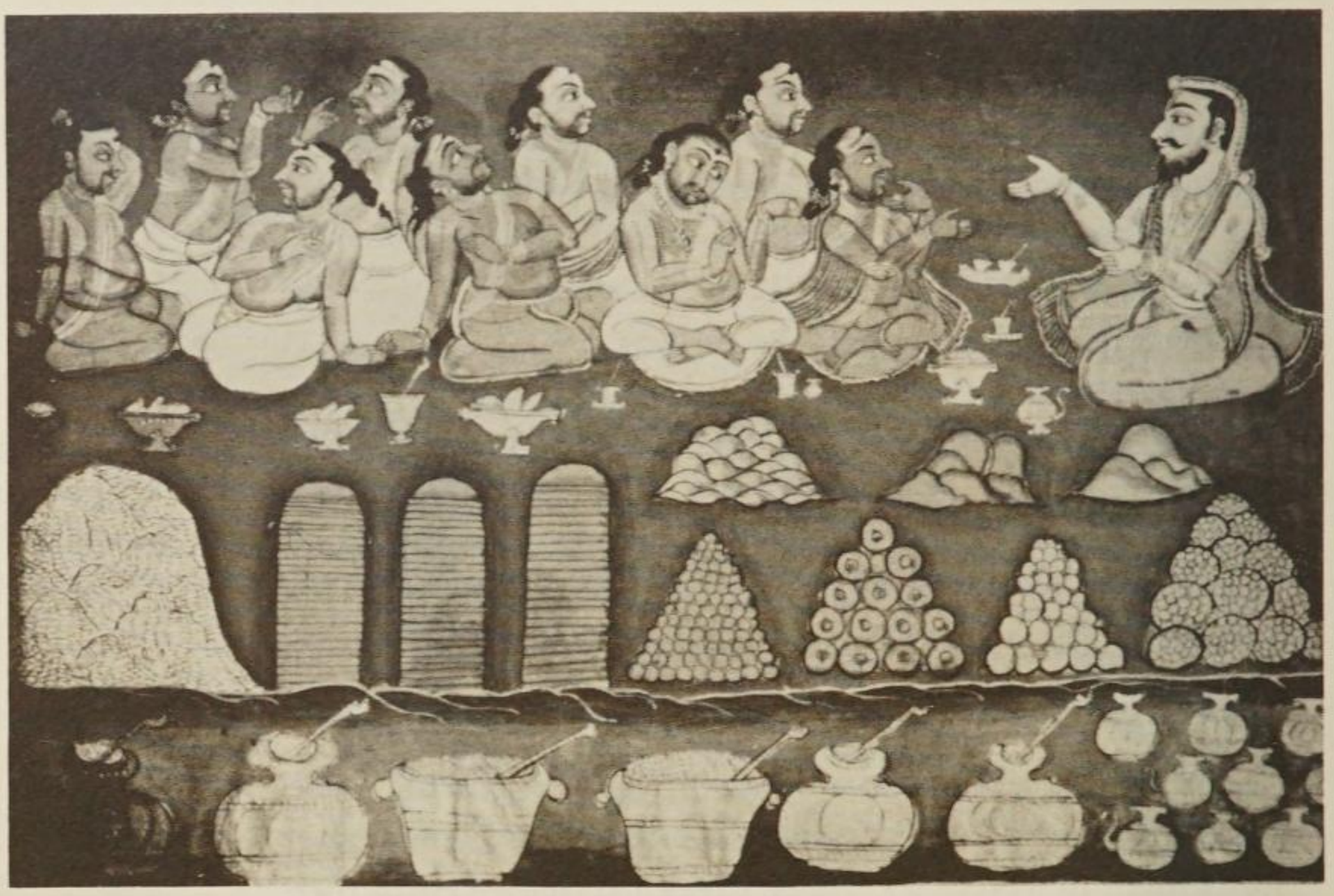
4 *Tbs. vinegar*
reserved spices from blender

SERVES 4

If foreign travellers had a difficult time recognizing some of the spices of Malabar, pity the poor fellow (again an Englishman in Malabar) whose breakfast there so mystified him: "At this meal, the first morning, I was surprised to see fried fish, in addition to the tea and coffee, and some plates containing, I thought, a sort of sausage, until it was recommended to me as a pleasant fruit called the plantain. . . ."

Such innocence in the eighteenth century! Fish should not have surprised him; South India is embraced on three sides by the sea. Fish, mussels, and tapioca are staples of non-vegetarian diet—and, also, there are a few fish at English breakfasts in England. Plantains, perhaps, were less understandable; they have astonished others before this good fellow. The Emperor Akbar was so intrigued by them that he ordered his chronicler to record a full description:

The plantain tree looks straight like a spear; the leaves come out of the trunk thick and soft, and resemble an unsewn plaited sleeve, but are much larger and wider. Out of the middle rises something looking like a spindle, of a lilac colour: this is the bud. The fruit consists of a cluster



Feast scene from a South Indian Ramayana, India's most famous epic poem.

of seventy to eighty plantains. In shape they resemble small cucumbers; the peel is easily removed. As plantains are very heavy, you cannot eat many. There are various kinds of plantains. The plant is every year cut down, and a stump only is left of it; if this is not done, it will no longer bear fruit. The vulgar believe that the plantain tree yields camphor, but this is wrong; for the camphor tree . . . is a different tree, although it has the same name. They also say that pearls originate in plantain trees—another statement upon which the light of truth does not shine.

Let the light of truth, then, shine upon another misunderstanding: a plantain is different from a banana; and a banana from its South Indian brother, which is a much smaller and sweeter fruit.

The South Indian word for its version of the banana is derived from two words meaning "fingers and toes," or "tiny little yellow-fingered trees"; for the South Indian

banana is, as one might have guessed, indeed very yellow and small. Mughal emperors raved about them, finding the larger version "insipid and tasteless" in comparison. But some people in India fear the tree, claiming it harbours demons. So, now and then, to exorcise the demons, a curious ceremony is performed: the poor possessed banana tree is wedded to a fig, which, it seems, has the necessary exorcist properties and frees the tree of its demons.

In cooking, the banana is often wed to cupfuls of creamy yogurt—this too is a harmonious union, especially if blessed with the appropriate spices, as in this recipe for *Kele ka Raita*.

A Cool Sweet Side Dish

(Kele ka Raita)

1 *cup mashed banana* (2–3 *bananas*)
2 *cups unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with a fork*
1 *tsp. powdered cumin*
½ *tsp. freshly ground black pepper*
2 *tsp. salt*
¼–1 *tsp. fresh green chili, seeded and minced (to taste)*
2 *Tbs. minced fresh coriander leaf (cilantro), or 2 Tbs. minced parsley*

SERVES 4 AS A SIDE DISH, 2 AS A FIRST COURSE

At least 30 minutes before serving, mix together all ingredients in an attractive serving bowl. Chill.

Note: An equal quantity of grated cucumber can be very successfully substituted for the banana if it is boiled for two minutes and drained thoroughly.

The flavour of parsley is a poor second in this particular recipe. Try to obtain the coriander leaf.

Kele ka Raita is just one of many versions of yogurt-based side dishes. All manner of raw vegetables, fruits, and spices marry well with this cooling and refreshing liquid. Try substituting pomegranate seeds, for example, in place of the banana. Toss in raisins, pistachios, almonds—yogurt is a most receptive and versatile medium. Yogurt and spice dishes were, in fact, the original "curries" of India. As we pointed out earlier, the word "curry" is derived, it seems, from the Tamil word *keri,* which means "containing yogurt"; and this remains the true definition of "curry" to this day. Still, it may surprise many an India buff to learn that the following dish, simply yogurt spiced and made fragrant, is not only a cooling and pleasant soup but also a "real curry."

The Original Curry

(Lassi Masaledar)

3 Tbs. vegetable oil
½ cup minced onion

In a small saucepan, heat the oil and fry onions until golden, but not crisp. Remove from heat.

½ tsp. powdered cumin
¼ tsp. turmeric
¼ tsp. ground hot red pepper
1 tsp. salt
pinch of ground black pepper

In a small saucer, mix together all the ingredients in this section with enough water to make a thick paste. Stir the paste into the onions. Return saucepan to medium heat. Stir for 2 minutes.

¼ cup grated, unsweetened coconut

Add all ingredients in this section to onion. Sauté for 3 minutes. Cover with ½ cup water and simmer until

cucumber is completely tender. Remove pan from heat, and cool.

1 *cup peeled and coarsely chopped cucumber*
1 *tsp. seeded and minced fresh, green chili pepper*

Stir the buttermilk into the cooled spicy mixture and reserve. In a very small saucepan, heat the oil to smoking. Tip the pan and drop mustard seeds into the collected oil. Cover pan immediately and shake over high flame until the seeds pop. Pour oil and seeds into buttermilk mixture. Cover and leave as long as possible before serving. Serve at room temperature.

2 *cups buttermilk*
1 *Tbs. vegetable oil*
½ *tsp. black mustard seed*

SERVES 2 AS BEVERAGE OR FIRST COURSE

Mango

Yogurt, coconut, and rice in South India are practically taken for granted; but mangoes, although they are almost as common, are a constant source of pride to the people. Like cardamom, pepper, and other local spices, they are indigenous and much sought after. The word "mango" comes from the Tamil *mankay,* which was pronounced by the Portuguese as "manga." If the Portuguese had difficulty pronouncing properly, they had even more trouble eating tidily. An Indian mango is full of juice, which it yields all too generously. The Indian method of eating one—in such a way as to avoid tipping the boy who stood ready with soap and water for washing—was to cut off the top at the narrow end, after having thoroughly kneaded the unpeeled fruit to a pulp, and to suck out both the fruit and the juice through this aperture in the skin "bag."

Only a little less tidy is a second method, invented anonymously: do not knead the fruit, but cut off two inches of its top—again at the narrow end. Slip a dessert spoon into this opening so that it slides down one side of the large center seed. Wiggle the spoon about and withdraw it. Repeat this process through the same aperture,

but on the opposite side of the seed. If you have wiggled properly, the seed will disengage itself and slip out of the fruit with the spoon. Then one has only to follow the recipe below.

1 *mango, seeded*

Cut it in half and eat it.

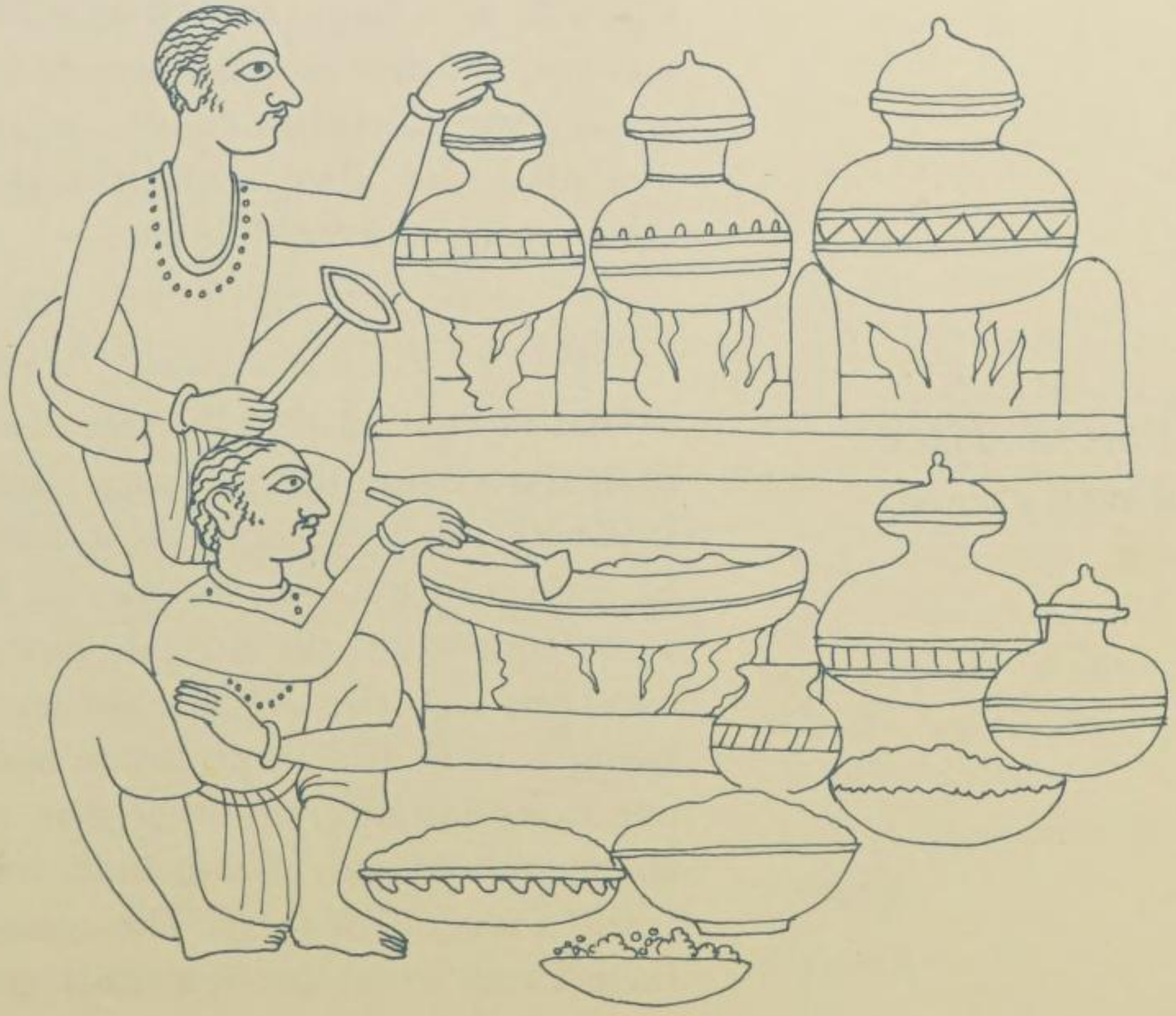
SERVES ONE, BUT TWO MANGOES ARE EVEN BETTER

This is by far the best recipe if you have an excellent mango. There are other recipes, such as thickened mango juice (*am ras*) eaten as a dessert; mango pickle or *acchar* as it is called, and dried green mango powder (*amchur*). The latter is often used as a seasoning and, like the pickle, is much easier to buy than to prepare. Sweetened mango juice is fairly easy to prepare: simply simmer the peeled and seeded fruit in a first-degree sugar syrup until it becomes a very thin purée; then strain, cool and season with fresh lime juice. But it is a highly seasonal dish and very dependent upon the right variety of mango. There are hundreds of varieties. Diaries of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, a tireless fruit enthusiast, give an interesting general description of this many-faced fruit, along with some useful hints about handling it:

> This fruit is unrivalled in colour, smell, and taste. . . . In shape it resembles an apricot, or a quince, or a pear or a melon, and weighs one *ser* [about two pounds—this is a slight exaggeration] and upwards. There are green, yellow, red, variegated, sweet, and subacid mangoes. . . . If a fruit gets injured whilst on the tree, its good smell will increase. The fruit is generally taken down when unripe, and kept in a particular manner.
>
> A young tree will bear fruit after four years. They put milk and treacle round about the tree, which makes the fruits sweeter. Some trees yield in one year a rich harvest, and less in the next one; others yield for one year no fruit at all. When many mangoes are eaten, digestion is assisted by drinking milk with the kernels of the mango stones.

The kernels of old stones are subacid, and taste well; when two or three years old they are used as medicine. If a half-ripe mango, together with its stalk to a length of about two fingers, be taken from the tree, and the broken end of its stalk be closed with warm wax, and kept in butter or honey, the fruit will retain its taste for two or three months whilst the colour will remain for over a year.

Akbar's records do not mention that in Malabar mango trees are often married, like banana and fig trees; but the wedding ceremonies, performed by the farmer, are to encourage fertility, not to exorcise demons. In any case, whatever demons may still inhabit South India, they are obviously demons well disposed to mankind and his environment. Rarely has a kingdom been so well blessed with beauty in every aspect of its culture.



Seventeen

Mysore

It has been said that Mysore is the gateway to Southwest India, the last outpost of opulence, the beginning of simplicity. This unique position, geographical and cultural, manifests itself in many ways. Probably the most representative of all the many manifestations is the central palace of Mysore, describe as "Indo-Saracenic" in style by the Mysore *Gazeteer*.

As Mysore was one of the largest Princely States, the enormous size of its palace is fitting; the style, however, is like the ruling class itself, something of a cultural melting pot. The late Maharaja of Mysore was so fond of classical music that he filled half of his palace with records, and once took along a grand piano when he went on an African safari (this safari in itself something of a paradox, as His Highness was a strict vegetarian).

Even the landscape of Mysore state's thirty thousand square miles is, in a sense, a contradiction: half of it hilly, half of it flat. The hilly half produces elephants, tigers, leopards, and bears, as well as antelope, deer, wild hog, monkey, and excellent timber. The flat half, blessed with ample water, supplies cotton, sugar cane, coconuts, and fine silkworms. Rice, of course, is everywhere, for it is synonymous with South India.

Ancient Rice
(Til Wala Chawal)

"What more need I say," wrote a sixteenth-century European about South India. "Everything is different from what it is with us and excels both in size and in beauty. They have no fruit the same as ours, no beast, no bird. This is a consequence of the extreme heat. They have no grain excepting only rice. All that the human body needs for its living is to be had in profusion and very cheap with the one exception of grain other than rice." Even today that comment holds true: South India is extraordinary and rice is still a way of life there. The average South Indian's diet includes no wheat and few other grains; rice alone is the

staple food, though it is eaten in many different forms. Most often it is served plain at the end of a meal, ladled from handsome bell-metal serving bowls into the center of the banana leaf plate. Nimble fingers knead it into balls, moistened with quantities of yogurt, and pop it into the mouth, using the rice ball to assemble and absorb all the flavours that still cling to the leaf: coconut, mustard seed, fenugreek seed, buttermilk, tamarind water, fresh ginger, red chili, and turmeric.

Occasionally the menu varies somewhat to include this delicious rice with sesame seed, a dish which, in its simplicity, must be as old as India itself. *Til* is the South Indian word for sesame seed, which is so basic a staple, that the very word for all oils in India, *tel,* derives from it. The taste of this dish is, in a sense, the taste of ancient India.

Pour the seeds into a large, heavy skillet and cover them with water. When the husks have floated to the top, scoop them off and discard. Rub the remaining seeds between the hands to clean them. Discard the soaking water. Drain the seeds and return to the ungreased skillet. Toast over medium heat, stirring constantly, until they are golden brown. A few will pop as they begin to dry.

½ cup sesame seeds

Remove skillet from heat. Stir in salt and chili pepper. Divide seeds in half and pulverize both portions in blender.

2 tsp. salt
½–1 tsp. ground hot red chili pepper (to taste)

Using two forks, gently fold and fluff the ground spices into the hot rice until it is thoroughly integrated. Serve very hot with vast quantities of butter and a side dish of yogurt.

1 cup white, long-grain rice, washed and boiled in ordinary manner
melted butter, to taste
at least 3 cups unflavoured yogurt, beaten smooth with a fork

Serve with a very light main course.

SERVES 4

Yet another use for rice is the *dosa,* omnipresent in South India: a crisp, thin, crèpelike bread, it is made of rice and lentils that have been soaked in water, fermented slightly, and ground into a batter. Typically these *dosas* are stuffed with a pungent filling of potatoes and onions, seasoned with ginger, chili, grated coconut, turmeric, and mustard seed. The *appuma* is a dessert variation of the *dosa,* delicately crisped and saturated with thick, sweet coconut cream—some people make a breakfast of it! But to make a perfect *appuma* requires experience and skill; it is much easier to be unauthentic and douse a huge, crisp French crèpe in coconut cream. The effect is every bit as elegant and it makes a lovely, light dessert, fitting flavour to linger in the mouth as a souvenir of Mysore state.

The Coconut

One must only know how to handle the coconut to reap a very rich culinary reward. Begin by selecting a good specimen, free of soft spots and heavy for its size. Shake it and listen for the liquid. The nut should be full, and its "eyes" —usually three—dark, fresh, and clear. Puncture one of these eyes with a sharp instrument when you are ready to prepare the coconut. Let the liquid flow into a cup. This liquid is *not* the coconut milk, but it can be drunk and is most refreshing. It is rarely heated or used in cooking as it becomes sticky and loses much of its flavour.

Next preheat the oven to 400° F. and bake the coconut for a quarter of an hour. Remove it directly to a chopping board and split it with a hammer or heavy chopping knife (it may already have split by itself in the oven) . All of the hard, outer shell will fall off with a few sharp blows and some gentle prodding, exposing the white meat with its covering of thin, brown skin. It is preferable to remove this skin with a knife or vegetable peeler, but not really necessary if the meat is to be grated, squeezed for its milk, and discarded—as for making coconut milk and cream.

Now, before proceeding to the process of making the milk

and cream, pause for a moment. Consider the coconut and the tree that produced this useful wonder: "the profitablest tree in the worlde," said an early traveller. "It doth alwayes beare fruit, and doth yeeld wine, oyle, sugar, vinegar, cordes, coles; of the leaves are made thatch for the houses, sayles for shippes, mats to sit on or lie on; of the branches they make their houses, and broomes to sweepe; of the tree, wood for shippes." South Indians call the coconut palm, more simply, "the tree which fulfills all wishes." You too will be grateful for it when you sample this exquisite rice. Included in the recipe are the basic rules for making Coconut Milk and Cream.

Coconut Cream, Coconut Milk, and Coconut Rice

Open the baked coconuts over a small bowl. Catch and reserve the liquid for drinking. Pare off the brown outer skin of the meat (if desired) and cut meat into 1-inch-square chunks. Little by little, pulverize these chunks in the blender, adding just enough water to facilitate grinding, no more. Remove all the ground pulp into a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth or tea towel. Gather the ends of the cloth to enclose the pulp. Squeeze this bag strongly over a small bowl to extract all the thick cream.

COCONUT CREAM
3 coconuts

Return the pulp to the blender. Add 2 cups hot water. Blend at high speed for 30 seconds. Scrape sides and blend again. Line a large strainer with the same damp cheesecloth. Hold the strainer over a small saucepan and strain contents of blender into it. Squeeze cloth strongly. Set this liquid coconut milk over low heat.

COCONUT MILK
2 cups hot, not boiling, water

Meanwhile, in a heavy, medium-sized saucepan, heat the butter and fry all ingredients in this section over medium heat until onions are tender and golden.

COCONUT RICE
¼ cup clarified butter
3 cardamom pods, slightly crushed

3 *inches of cinnamon stick*
4 *bay leaves*
4 *cloves*
2–4 *fresh, green chilis, seeded and minced (optional)*
1 *cup minced onion*
2 *tsp. minced garlic*
1 *tsp. scraped and grated ginger root, or* 1/4 *tsp. powdered ginger*
2 *Tbs. unflavoured yogurt*
2 *cups white, long-grain rice (not precooked)*
1 *Tbs. crushed pistachios or cashews*
1 *tsp. salt*
1 *Tbs. fresh lime or lemon juice*

Stir in all ingredients in this section. Continue stirring until rice is lightly browned.

One by one, add the nuts, 2 cups of prepared coconut milk, salt, and the coconut cream. Stir briefly between each addition. Bring liquid to a boil. Cover pot and reduce heat to lowest possible level. Leave without stirring for 15 minutes or until rice is tender and all liquid absorbed.

Fluff rice with a fork and pour lime juice over it just before serving. This rice will be heavier than ordinary rice because of the coconut liquid.

SERVES 6–8

Serve with a light meat dish, yogurt, and one green vegetable.

Vegetables and Coconut for Those Who Like Neither
(Konkani Amti)

If you grow passionately fond of the coconut and would like to convince skeptics of its virtues, follow the rice with *Konkani Amti,* vegetables in coconut milk and cream, and serve it with a bit of information on the auspiciousness of the nut itself.

So important is the coconut as a symbol of prosperity and fertility in Hindu culture that it is popularly called

Sriphala, holy or sacred fruit. Its three eyes are like the three eyes of Lord Shiva, Hindu god of destruction, and its little fibrous tuft like the scalp lock of a Brahmin, priestly caste of India. So close is its resemblance to the human head that the coconut is broken at religious ceremonies as a powerful, but bloodless, sacrifice. It is never broken, however, in the presence of a pregnant woman, lest the same fate befall her child's head. Some religious folk see the coconut's three-part composition—shell, meat, and liquid—as representing the Hindu Trinity: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva—a rather esoteric resemblance that some find more important than others. Everyone, however, loves the annual celebration of Coconut Full Moon, after which, by an age-old understanding, the southwest monsoon is due to abate.

The fires of hunger will also abate with the appearance of this *Konkani Amti,* a saucy combination of green peas and cashews, coconut milk and coconut cream, guaranteed to please even those skeptics who claim to dislike coconut or peas.

½ cup grated unsweetened coconut
2 tsp. garlic, minced
2 tsp. scraped and minced ginger root

In a heavy, ungreased skillet, toast the coconut, stirring constantly over low heat until it just begins to turn golden. Pour into blender. Add ginger and garlic and grind to a smooth, thick paste with ¼ cup water.

1 cup fresh green peas
½ cup unsalted cashews
¼ cup coarsely chopped onion
2–4 tsp. seeded and minced fresh, green chili peppers (to taste)
3 Tbs. butter
2 tsp. salt

Add 2 cups water to the paste in the blender and blend again briefly. Pour this liquid into a large saucepan. Add 4 cups more water and all remaining ingredients in this section. Boil uncovered until liquid is reduced to level of peas and nuts. Reserve off heat.

1½ cups coconut milk
1½ cups coconut cream

Meanwhile, prepare the coconut milk and cream (see p. 303). When peas are ready, stir in coconut milk and

simmer for 5 minutes. Just before serving stir in coconut cream, lime juice, and sugar. Heat through and serve. Keeps very well in refrigerator.

Serve over plain, white rice.

juice of 1 *fresh lime* (*about* 3 *Tbs.*)
1 *Tbs. sugar*

SERVES 4

There is one last product of the generous coconut tree that must not be overlooked: *tardi,* better known as "toddy," "the wine that doeth issue out of the tope of the tree." According to custom and the early diary of a wandering foreigner, toddy is fairly simple to make and not unpleasant to drink: "They cut a branch of a bowe and binde it hard, and hange an earthen pot upon it, which they emptie every morning and every evening, and still it and put in it certaine dried raisins, and it becommeth very strong wine in short time."

Tea (Cawa)

Toddy is only occasionally used in cooking, but very frequently drunk as a "relaxant," so frequently, in fact, that the toddy-drinking habit has given rise to many proverbs. One of them says, "If you drink milk beneath a toddy tree, people will suspect you drank toddy." Perhaps, then, it is safer in South India to protect one's good reputation and sit among the tea camellias; tea could never be taken for toddy, and tea plantations are as plentiful in Mysore as coconut or coffee. The habit of tea-drinking, however, was not widespread in India until the advent of the British; although it seems that even among the British there were those who first drank tea in India. "I remember well," wrote one English gentleman, "how in 1681 I, for the first time in my life, drank tee at the house of an Indian chaplain, and how I could not understand how sensible men could think it was a treat to drink what tasted no better than hay water."

Tastes have surely changed today—at least, for Indians. From North to South they are fond of drinking tea and prepare it in a number of interesting ways—none of which

tastes like hay water. The Mughals, for example, prepared a sweet and rather spicy tea, commonly known as *cawa.* Adding 5 cups of cold water for every ounce of tea leaves, they would let the pot boil half an hour; then, adding more water, sugar, and spices, they would boil it for another half hour, according to a recipe that must have come from their homelands in the steppes of Transoxiana.

In Kashmir, one variety of tea is also boiled for an hour —this time with soda (similar to baking soda), milk, salt, and butter—a brew that originated in Ladakh. The people of Kashmir like their tea strong, but they have not acquired the Tibetan habit of eating cooked green tea leaves as a vegetable. They do, however, prepare a delicate dessert tea, also green and also known as *cawa.* Fifteen cups of crystal-clear water are brought to boil in a heavy samovar with eight cardamom pods, slightly crushed, and a few bits of cinnamon stick. When the water boils, five teaspoonsful of green tea are added and boiled for a scant three minutes, never longer. Sugar may be added and boiled with the tea (about 1 teaspoon per cup) or it may be passed separately, depending on one's taste. Tea and spices in this quantity will serve tiny cups to ten or twelve people.

The "crystal-clear water" in this recipe is the essential ingredient. Water is a luxury in India, to Muslims and Hindus alike. Hindus have always reverenced it, especially Ganges water, and have swaddled the subject in a wrapping of rules which run several hundred pages: how to cool water, how to strain and flavour it, and how to prepare it for religious rituals or for the pleasure of the maharaja.

The Muslims, less concerned with religious aspects, nevertheless sought after excellent water and considered that of the Ganges River unrivalled in every respect. They used it whenever possible for cooking, drinking, and bathing.

The Mughals, as usual, went everyone one better and created out of water, rose-water; and out of rose-water, rose attar, a very heady perfume. The rose-water was nothing

new; it had been used for centuries, both as an auspicious greeting sprinkled on guests and as a final, delicate touch to many dishes. But rose attar was something new, a discovery of Emperor Jehangir's mother-in-law. She was preparing vats of rose-water for her son-in-law's birthday celebrations, when she happened to be distracted by some harem intrigue. Returning the next day, she was horrified to find that the vats were covered with scum. Undaunted, she collected this scum, which she found to be very sweet-smelling. Jehangir was so delighted when he sampled it that he presented her with a set of enormous pearls, and wrote in his memoirs, "If one drop be rubbed on the palm of the hand, it scents a whole assembly, and it seems as if many red rosebuds had bloomed at once. There is no scent equal to it; it restores hearts that have gone and brings back withered souls."

Perhaps rose attar should have appeared on the scene a little earlier in Indian history. Its restorative properties might have been very welcome after an ancient drinking bout. Though many people don't realize it, abstinence is not an ancient virtue in India. The following words were written by a Hindu poet in A.D. 300:

Blessed are those that are Drunk with drink;
Blessed are those that are Soaked with drink;
Blessed are those that are Washed with drink;
Blessed are those that are Choked with drink.

As South India had toddy, every region in India had its particular liquid stimulant. In ancient India these stimulants were called *ashav,* which in Sanskrit means "extract." Much later, during the Mughal period, more elaborate brews were concocted.

Ruling chieftains of Rajasthan found that their strength was sapped by constant warfare. One or two specialists were therefore detailed to develop an invigorating drink which would not be inebriating; there was no limit to the

brewery budget, but hangover was anathema. This was t
birth of Rajasthani *asha. Asha* came in various forms a
with various price tags. One that contained six differe
meats and two hundred and fifty herbs was discontinu
by one ruler because of its inordinate cost. Many othe
just a little less complicated, were only recently disc
tinued—for lack of a permit to distil.

The Mughals, though forbidden by the Prophet
drink, had a terrible time resisting. When they were
distilling *asha,* they were preparing a wine made b
method borrowed from Afghanistan of extracting a wi
from a wine. Large earthenware jars were filled with wi
on which floated a hollow ball of clay. The jars were th
sealed and left for two years while the clay ball slo
filled with wine. Filtered in this manner through a thi
ness of clay, the wine in the ball would be rare, given
none but the greatest lords as the finest extract of the j

Few of these practices and liquids remain today. Wa
has regained its rightful place. The "essence of life," a
is known to the Hindus, is still the best accompaniment
an Indian meal. For those who must have something a
stronger, we recommend cold beer. For those who won
about serving wine with Indian food, we offer our opini
that its flavour is drowned by the savoury spices, but shou
they insist, here is the recipe for an ancient remedy
overindulgence:

Remedy for a Rich Patient Overheated with Wine

The body is to be smeared with paste of white sandalwo
made cooler by contact with cold beams of the mo
pearly necklaces, and the water produced from melted i
He should be laid down on a bed of full-blown lo
flowers, sparkling with dew drops on lotus leaves.
should try to alleviate the burning feeling by strolling
the banks of a pool in the soft, cool, and sweet bree
bearing on its wings the soft perfume of red lotus and wa
moss, which dangled in the adjoining pool.

Young and beautiful damsels, with their full and thi

set breasts and thighs anointed with sandal pastes, being clad in wet clothes and with their necklaces and girdles loosely sliding down their bosoms and slender waists, should lie there with him in their firm embrace. These damsels should refresh him with their secret charms in a lonely chamber, and by means of their bodily coolness they should be able to alleviate the burning sensation of the aggravated inner fire due to overdrinking.

—*Sushruta Samhita*

Should this classic remedy be unavailable to you, there is an alternative—the betel-leaf *paan*—the one essential in the rituals of hospitality that never fails to puzzle the uninitiated. Puzzle is perhaps not the word to describe the experience; Niccolo Manucci, an early Portuguese traveller, recounts his own impressions in some detail:

The Betel-Leaf Paan

Among other things, I was much surprised to see that almost everybody was spitting something red as blood. I imagined it must be due to some complaint of the country, or that their teeth had become broken. I asked an English lady what was the matter, and whether it was the practice in this country for the inhabitants to have their teeth extracted. When she understood my question, she answered that it was not any disease, but due to a certain aromatic leaf called in the language of the country *paan,* or in Portuguese *betele*. She caused some leaves to be brought, ate some herself, and gave me some to eat. Having taken them, my head swam to such an extent that I feared I was dying. It caused me to fall down; I lost my colour, and endured agonies; but she poured into my mouth a little salt, and brought me to my senses. The lady assured me that everyone who ate it for the first time felt the same effects.

Betel, or *paan,* is a leaf similar to the ivy leaf, but the betel leaf is longer; it is very medicinal, and eaten by everybody in India. They chew it along with *areca,* which physicians call *Avelans Indicas,* and a little *kath,* which is

the dried juice of a certain plant that grows in Ind
Smearing the betel leaf with a little of the *kath,* they ch
them together, which makes the lips scarlet and gives
pleasant scent.

Guests in India today rarely leave a meal without bei
offered a *paan.* It can be complicated with the addition
tobacco as a flavouring and stimulant and such delicac
as jellied roses, menthol, saffron, or musk. But a simp
paan, one you can offer in your own home, with or wi
out the betel leaf, consists of cardamom seed, anise se
cloves, and fresh sweet almonds. Arrange a little mound
each on a tiny tray, garnish with a flower, and pass to yo
guests after they have left the table. This is the mome
for soft music and noble repose.

A Guide to Menu Planning

In the following table, all of the recipes in this book are divided into three categories: easy, moderate, and difficult. The easy recipes can be prepared by an inexperienced cook without spending an inordinate amount of time (fifteen minutes to an hour), and the results will be delicious. Moderate recipes usually take a little longer (an hour to an hour and a half), and they require more careful supervision than the easy dishes. Many of these moderate dishes will be easy for the cook who has mastered the basic techniques used in the recipes we have called easy; the more you cook Indian food, the easier it gets. Even the difficult dishes become easier with practice, but there is no escaping the fact that these particular recipes are time-consuming and require a knowledge of techniques that are part of the repertoire of a dedicated Indian cook. Don't try them until you feel at home with the spices, tastes, textures, and fragrances that are an integral part of royal Indian cookery. Whenever there has been a fine line to draw between these categories, we have put the dish into the more difficult section.

An asterisk indicates that the dish is a relatively hot, spicy one; "relatively" is a loaded word here, because the cook can control the spiciness of any dish by using more or less chili pepper. However, for the beginning cook (or partaker) of Indian food, the asterisks will provide some guidance.

Some recipes appear more than once in the table since they can be used for various courses in a meal; some of the

meat dishes can also be made with chicken (although the cooking time should be reduced—use the "Chicken for Chickens" recipe on page 192 as a timing guide), and these adaptable recipes appear under both meat and chicken listings.

After the table, we have listed a number of menus, beginning with suggestions for hors d'oeuvres to serve with cocktails and ending with a series of elaborate feasts combining recipes from various sections of India for the adventurous cook. In between are recommended menus for everyday meals which include two or three Indian dishes or one elaborate dish that can be served with a simple green salad for a complete dinner. Undoubtedly these menus would shock the purist, because we like to mix tastes and textures from all over India, but we believe that these combinations will please all kinds of people, especially those who think they do not enjoy an "exotic" Indian meal!

Please keep in mind that these menus are only suggestions and that you are encouraged to look through the book for recipe combinations you think sound attractive. They may, in fact, be superior. Do not be put off by the complications of dishes that take a long time to cook; remember that many of them can be prepared well in advance and either frozen for use at some future time or held in the refrigerator overnight and reheated or given the finishing touches just before mealtime.

Although the desserts we have included in this book are some of the least sweet of Indian desserts, they may still be either too sweet or too heavy to be pleasing to a Western palate. In the everyday menus, therefore, we have omitted dessert suggestions, though they may be easily found in the table below. One of our favorite ways to end an Indian meal—and a suggestion we would like to pass on to you—is to fill a goblet with a totally Western citrus sherbet and top it with icy champagne.

	EASY	MODERATE	DIFFICULT
Soups	Contentment, p. 70	Unorthodox Soup, p. 70 Yogurt—Tart and Spicy, p. 113 The Opulentil, p. 206 Patiala Vegetables, p. 219 Lentils for a Song, p. 262 Vegetables and Coconut for Those Who Like Neither, p. 304	
Saucy Meat Dishes	Something Simple, p. 54 *Eldest Daughter-in-Law's Dinner, p. 65 Milky Meat, p. 253 Coriander Korma, p. 258	Meat to Make with a Friend, p. 76 Meat with Imperial Almond Sauce, p. 104 *Meat with Any Vegetables, p. 153 Central Indian Tripe, p. 164 Ancestral Stewpot, p. 165 Founder's Feast, p. 203 Hyderabad's Most Acclaimed Curry, p. 205 *Terrible Tomatoes and Meat, p. 225 Tripe with Saffron, p. 250 *Vindaloo, p. 291	Three-Stage Over-indulgence, p. 93 *Pomegranate Meat, p. 263
Relatively Sauceless Meat Dishes	*Brains, p. 134 *Whole Spices, Ground Meat, p. 150 *Addled Brains Palanpur, p. 151 Spring Lamb Snack, p. 251	*Meat to Separate the Boys from the Mince, p. 72 Sulas, p. 89 Wheat with Meat, p. 115 Desert Spareribs, p. 127 Feast-Day Meat, p. 129 Pullao to Administer Garlic to Those Who Would Avoid It, p. 142 *Small and Round Kababs, p. 146 His Highness Eats Peacock Eggs, p. 175 *The Well-Spiced Shank, p. 177	Full Moon Kababs, p. 73 *Rajput Rabbit Food, p. 96 A Fruit Pullao, p. 107 Twenty-four Hour Turnip, p. 167

	EASY	MODERATE	DIFFICULT
		Heart, p. 181 Kohinoor Kabab, p. 221 Lucknow Kababs, p. 273 Shah Jehan's Last Stew, p. 279	
Fish Dishes	*Fish to Ward Off Evil Spirits, p. 62	Sulas, p. 89 Poppy-Seed Fish, p. 162 Feet-First Fish, p. 255	
Poultry Dishes†	Chicken Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts, p. 100 *Chili Bird and Salt, p. 118 Fowl in 500 Bats of an Eye, p. 137 Milky Meat, p. 253	Sulas, p. 89 Meat with Imperial Almond Sauce, p. 104 Virgin Chicken, p. 110 *The Well-Spiced Shank, p. 177 *Fried Chicken for After the Hunt, p. 181 Chicken for Chickens, p. 192 *Tandoori Game Hens, p. 272 Shah Jehan's Last Stew, p. 279	Edible Edifice, p. 199 Twenty-Four-Hour Turnip (use duck or goose), p. 167 Chicken, Cinnamon, and Steam, p. 218
Vegetable Dishes	Between-the-Battles Baked Vegetable, p. 119 Fried Vegetables, Fit for a King, p. 120 Nepalese Pungent Pea, p. 171 Camp Corn, p. 185 Corn and Walnuts, p. 260	Solid Spinach, p. 166 *Nepalese Potentato, p. 169 *Central Indian Peas and Potatoes, p. 179 Patiala Vegetables, p. 219 Lentils and Green Tomatoes, p. 228 Mustard Greens, p. 228 *Benarasi Cauliflower, p. 242 *Pungent Eggplant, p. 259 Vegetables and Coconut for Those Who Like Neither, p. 304	Potatoes to Perfume the Palace, p. 222

† See comments in the third paragraph of this Guide on substituting chicken in meat recipes.

	EASY	MODERATE	DIFFICULT
Rice Dishes	Plain rice, p. 69 Kishengarh Kitchera, p. 135 *Rice from the Foothills, p. 261 Ancient Rice, p. 300	Spinach and Roses, p. 141 Chick-Pea Pullao, p. 270 Coconut Rice, p. 303	Vegetarian Pullao, p. 186
Side Dishes	Wife-Saving Salad, p. 147 Water Chestnut Snack, p. 257 A Cool Sweet Side Dish, p. 295	*Undecipherable Dip, p. 92 Paneer, p. 84 Yogurt—Tart and Spicy, p. 113 Spicy Side Dish, p. 191 Tomatoes Ali Pasha, p. 201 The Bananas of Benares, p. 233 Chick-Pea Pasta, p. 243	Clouds of Curds, p. 138 *Green Chili Preserves, p. 194
Breads	Well-Behaved Bread, p. 109 Corn Bread, p. 230	Third Hand Bread (Chapati) , p. 99 Puris, p. 226 Breakfast of Shah Jehan, p. 275	
Eggs	Instant Eggs, p. 149 *Early Morning Eggs, p. 189	The Elegant Egg, p. 170	Camel's Humph Kababs, p. 125
Beverages	*The Original Curry, p. 296 Coconut Cream, p. 303 Coconut Milk, p. 303 Tea, p. 307	Cobra Cooler, p. 190	
Desserts	The Emperor's Apples, p. 106 Date Delight, p. 276 Mango, p. 297	A Wheat Sweet, p. 130 Dessert for the Darkness, p. 178 Sweet Innocence, p. 234 Twenty-Four-Carat Toast, p. 278	Dessert for a Dear and Heavy Heart, p. 91 Seven Dynasty Dessert, p. 198

Hors d'Oeuvres

A number of Indian sauces, soups, or side dishes can make unusually attractive dips for crackers or Indian breads—such as puris, which adventurous guests can be encouraged to make themselves in a fondue pot filled with heated oil. Some recommendations:

A Cool Sweet Side Dish (*Kele ka Raita*), p. 295
Lentils and Green Tomatoes (*Patiala Dal*), p. 228
Undecipherable Dip (*Bahadur Shahi Dahi*), p. 92
Unorthodox Soup (*Haleem*), p. 70, served with raw vegetables

The following dishes make excellent snacks for eating at any time:

Spring Lamb Snack (*Kashmiri Tubbak Maz*), p. 251
Chick-pea Pasta (*Panolia*), p. 243
Water Chestnut Snack (*Singarde Tale Hue*), p. 257

Perhaps the most impressive array of hors d'oeuvres to serve at a large party is an assortment of hot kababs, each a different flavour and texture. All of these can be made ahead of time and cooked or reheated just before serving.

Small and Round Kababs (*Shammi Kabab*), p. 146
Prepare in advance; sauté gently before serving.
Peacock Eggs (*Nauratani Kabab*), p. 175
Prepare the meat in advance; make it into balls and fill and fry them just before serving.
Lucknow Kababs (*Seekh Kabab*), p. 273
Prepare ahead and grill just before serving.
Full Moon Kababs (*Sikampuri Kabab*), p. 73
Prepare in advance; assemble and deep-fry before serving.
Clouds of Curds (*Dahi ka Kabab*), p. 138
Prepare in advance and sauté before serving.
Camel's Humph Kababs (*Ande ka Kabab*), p. 125
Prepare in advance and reheat at serving time.

Luncheon

Early Morning Eggs (*Andee ki Chutney*), p. 189
Fruit salad
Bread

Vegetables and Coconut for Those Who Like Neither (*Konkani Amti*), p. 304
Kisengarh Kitchera (*Kitchera*), p. 135
A Cool Sweet Side Dish (*Kele ka Raita*), p. 295

Camp Corn (*Kees*), p. 185
Chili Bird and Salt (*Shikari Murgi*), p. 118
Green salad

Addled Brains Palanpur (*Bheja*), p. 151
Third Hand Bread (*Chapati*), p. 99
Contentment (*Sada Dal*), p. 70
Wife-Saving Salad (*Sukhi Dal*), p. 147

Dinner

Pullao to Administer Garlic to Those Who Would Avoid It (*Saadaa Pullao*), p. 142
Pungent Eggplant (*Khatta Bangan*), p. 259
Crisp green salad

Milky Meat (*Aab Gosht*), p. 253
Potatoes to Perfume the Palace (*Dum Allu*), p. 222
Salad or a green vegetable

Wheat with Meat (*Soweeta*), p. 115
Plain rice, p. 69

Fish to Ward Off Evil Spirits (*Rai ki Macchi*), p. 62
Plain rice, p. 69
Fried Vegetables, Fit for a King (*Subzi Tali Hui*), p. 120

Chicken Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts (*Murgi ka Kima*), p. 100

Third Hand Bread (*Chapati*), p. 99
Yogurt—Tart and Spicy (*Kardi*), p. 113

Meat to Separate the Boys from the Mince (*Hari Mirchi Wala Kima*), p. 72
Plain rice, p. 69
A Cool Sweet Side Dish (*Kele ka Raita*), p. 295

Twenty-Four-Hour Turnip (*Shubdeg*), p. 167
Plain rice, p. 69
Crisp green salad

Feast Day Menus

The combination of recipes that we put together for each of the following feasts might not be recognizable to a Mughal Emperor or a Central Indian warlord of yore. We have chosen somewhat different menus because we feel that many of their dishes were prepared by twenty or thirty cooks and might be too complicated for the two or four hands that usually man an Occidental kitchen. While they, out of pride, would never mix their dishes with those of a foreign and often enemy court, we have no such compunctions and delight in the unusual combinations we create.

Making these feasts will take several hours; the wise cook will follow our advice and prepare some dishes the day before. Thus their flavours will have time to mature and blend and the cook will have leisure to relax. Because the feasts are elaborate, the dishes sometimes difficult and lengthy to prepare, and the resulting feasts perhaps overwhelming to an inexperienced palate, we recommend that you prepare one only after you have mastered the easy dishes from the menu-planning chart and that you serve it first to friends who know enough about food to appreciate the opulence of a maharaja's culinary indulgence. Above all, enjoy your own feast by planning a leisurely cooking time, preferably with an extra hour or so to let kitchen aromas recede discreetly to the background.

Rajasthani Feast

At a Rajasthani feast, the women rise—heads covered and eyes downcast—when the master of the house arrives on the roof terrace where the meal is customarily served. If the master should enter a bit unsteadily, chances are that in another wing of the house dancing girls have been performing for the men, as they so often do before a feast. During this performance, it is the custom to offer one's fellows a stiff drink, which is proffered in a dancing girl's hand. Because a refusal of this drink—which must be downed in one go—is well nigh unthinkable, unsteady is not an unusual state for the gentlemen who come to dinner.

Perhaps this is why men and women still eat separately, seated on carpets before their low tables under the open sky. The classic *thal* or eating platter placed on each person's table is made of flat, round leaves laced together with tiny twigs, as it has been for centuries. It is a good idea in your own home to serve each dish in small, individual bowls—perhaps grouped around a dinner plate. Thus each person can mix flavours and textures as he likes, exactly as in Rajasthan.

Sulas, p. 89
Prepare them early in the day; grill at the last minute.

Wheat with Meat (*Soweeta*), p. 115
This one must cook long and slowly.

Yogurt—Tart and Spicy (*Kardi*), p. 113
Can be prepared ahead of time and reheated at the last moment.

Between-the-Battles Baked Vegetable (*Bangan ka Bhurtha*), p. 119
Can be prepared the day before if desired.

Fried Vegetables Fit for a King (*Subzi Tali Hui*), p. 120

Crisply fried at the last minute and dusted with spices.

Dessert for a Dear and Heavy Heart (*Diljani*), p. 91
This can be prepared early in the day; needs no last-minute preparation.

Central Indian Feast

Central Indian *thals* are made of silver or brass rather than leaves, with little bowls or *kathoris* ranged around the tray and a space left in the center for rice. The order of arrangement is most important but varies from region to region. All of it is based on tastes which marry well; thus a dab of appropriate chutney or *acchar* (green chili preserves) would be placed beside its meat or vegetable. A little mound of salt and wedges of lime are often included on the tray. This is an attractive and helpful touch which looks lovely on a plate as well. The sweet, in Central India, is part of the meal, served with all of the other dishes. The punctuation to the meal is supplied by the *papads,* or *poppadums,* which appear, freshly prepared, at the end.

Small and Round Kababs (*Shammi Kabab*), p. 146
They can be prepared the day before and fried at the last minute.

Vegetarian Pullao (*Subzi ka Pullao*), p. 186
Can be prepared early in the day and assembled and reheated before serving.

Chicken for Chickens (*Murgi Survedar*), p. 192
Prepare early in the day; reheat for one half hour.

Spicy Side Dish (*Jam ki Lonji*), p. 191
Can be prepared beforehand and reheated at the last moment.

Dessert for the Darkness (*Barodo Bhuran*), p. 178
Prepare it beforehand; no further preparation. Serve with the meal or after, as desired.

Papads (or Poppadums)
Buy a good commercial brand. They can either be heated over a gas flame or fried in oil, but should always be prepared just before serving.

Kashmiri Feast

This Kashmiri feast is a simplified version; a real one would take days to prepare. There is a special group of people in Kashmir who do nothing but prepare such feasts, transforming a goat into sixteen or twenty dishes, the last of which is always *gustaba*. *Gustaba* are huge meatballs the size of a tennis ball, which are beyond the realm of a private kitchen as they take hours of pounding and kneading.

The dishes are passed in huge serving bowls and one takes according to one's desires, placing each little serving in a different hollow of the huge mound of rice already on the plate. Kashmiris eat tremendous quantities of rice, and it is well to serve it with this feast as many of the dishes are very saucy and the sauce is too good to waste.

A Kashmiri feast is an excellent opportunity to pull out your Oriental carpets and to use a samovar, if you have one, for the *cawa* is a perfect dessert.

Spring Lamb Snack (*Kashmiri Tubbak Maz*), p. 251
Can be simmered tender well in advance and fried at the last minute.

Pomegranate Meat (*Kala Maz*), p. 263
Must be prepared well in advance.

Plain rice, p. 69
Count on at least one cup cooked rice per person.

Corn and Walnuts (*Makki Akroat*), p. 260
Can be prepared quickly at the last minute.

Mustard Greens (*Sarsoon ka Sag*), p. 228
Prepare this only if there are many guests; otherwise the corn is sufficient.

Tea (*Cawa*), p. 307

Prepare this in a samovar or serve in a beautiful teapot after you have left the table.

Mughal Banquet

A Mughal banquet was, without question, the most elaborate in Indian history. For you it will be an excellent opportunity to pull out all your finery and permeate the room with incense. It may be difficult, however, to match the atmosphere of this sixteenth-century banquet in Delhi, as described below by an English visitor:

The banquet was given in the principal hall, in which there were added on this occasion rich carpets of silk, silver, and gold, which covered the floor, serving as ground tables, according to the native custom, as also for seats for the guests. This superb display was accompanied by various large perfume vessels and silver braziers of extraordinary form placed in order all around the hall, which burnt very sweet perfumes composed of amber, civet, and other blended pastilles, which in their union delighted the sense of smell. At the entrance of this beautiful hall the water works on one side delivered seven streams, falling in a large basin, thus able to be always used for those washings of the feet which in Mughal manners are one of the most essential parts of ceremonial courtesy.

When the time came, the Emperor arrived, accompanied by a great train of beautiful and gallant ladies. While this company was arriving, they presently began to play in the neighbouring rooms many and various instruments until the Emperor was seated in the middle of the cushions. While this concert was proceeding, the arrangements for handwashing made their appearance, borne by four beauties of the court.

When this was finished, dinner was brought in with a loud sound of wind instruments. The banquet was served

in rich dishes of gold borne by eunuchs. Of these, the four chief ones placed themselves near His Majesty, doing nothing but handing up the courses which the other eunuchs brought to two beautiful girls who were on their knees at the Emperor's side.

At the end of the conversation, the banquet having lasted four hours, twelve dancing women entered, who performed in a manner unsuited to Christian society.

Unorthodox Soup (*Haleem*), p. 70
Can be prepared the day before; serve very hot in demitasse cups before your guests proceed to table.

Edible Edifice (*Dahi Pullao*), p. 199
All basic preparations can be made the day before; start final assembly two hours before serving. Open at the table.

Shah Jehan's Last Stew (*Shah Jehani Korma*), p. 279
Preparing it one day in advance greatly improves the flavour; simply reheat and serve.

Tomatoes Ali Pasha (*Tamatar ki Kaat*), p. 201
Can be prepared one day in advance; serve as a side dish.

A Cool Sweet Side Dish (*Kele ka Raita*), p. 295
A cooling complement to the rich dishes.

Seven Dynasty Dessert (*Badam ke Kulche*), p. 198
Pass this after your guests have left the table and are relaxing with tea or coffee.

Vegetarian Feast

The most charming vegetarian feast we have ever attended was on the banks of the Ganges at Benares. We sat on the terrace of an ancient family home, peering over its walls at the river. Perched along these walls were tiny clay bowls;

some held jasmine flowers floating on water and some a cotton wick burning in sweet oil. Their scent mingled with the conversation, which stilled when the music began. After the music, an old silver urn and basin were passed for each guest to wash his hands.

We arranged ourselves on the ground before our *thals,* each one decorated with an elaborate design traced on its border in coloured rice flour. One by one attendants passed before us, ladling fragrant soups and vegetables from special brass serving dishes into the cups on our trays. Hot breads came regularly and, at the end of the meal, huge papads. When we could hardly move, the lady of the house came quietly and performed the traditional *ittar paan,* blessing our visit to her home. She sprinkled a few drops of rose-water over us, rubbed sandalwood paste on the backs of our hands, and offered us each an aromatic betel leaf *paan* wrapped in a paper-thin sheet of silver.

The Raita in this menu comes from her kitchen; other recipes are gathered from all over India, for an unorthodox but excellent meal.

Spinach and Roses (*Palak Pullao*), p. 141
Mughal influenced; rich and satisfying, this can be prepared early in the day.

The Elegant Egg (*Ande ka Acchar*), p. 170
This dish is optional, not being strictly vegetarian. It must be prepared early in the day.

Central Indian Peas and Potatoes (*Allu Batla ki Bhaji*), p. 179
Deliciously pungent. You can use frozen peas, but must prepare this at the last minute.

A Cool Sweet Side Dish (*Kele ka Raita*), p. 295
Can be prepared far ahead of time; serve in little bowls or cups.

Corn Bread (*Makki ki Roti*), p. 230
One of the few breads that can be prepared ahead and kept in a warm oven.

Date Delight (*Khajur ka Halwa*), p. 276
Very nice; it must be done at the last minute, while someone is serving coffee.

"I will only say this much, that this India, as regards fruits and other things, is entirely different from Christiandom." (Friar Jordanus, 1328 A.D.)

Mail-Order Sources

In the four years we have been working on this book, during which time we have made frequent trips to the United States, we have found a remarkable increase in the availability of Indian food and ingredients in supermarkets and specialty shops throughout the country. Therefore it is truly possible now to re-create these authentic ancient

recipes in an American kitchen without having to omit essential ingredients. If you have difficulty in locating any particular item, however, the following are possible sources for mail-order purchases.

East

Cambridge Coffee, Tea and Spice House
267 Medford Street
Charlestown, Massachusetts 02129

India Food and Condiments
809 Lexington Avenue
New York, New York 10016

Spices and Foods Unlimited, Inc.
2018A Florida Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

Midwest

Gabriel Importing Co.
2461 Russell Street
Detroit, Michigan 48207

India Gift and Food Store
1031 Belmont
Chicago, Illinois 60657

International House of Foods
440 West Gorham Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

South

Antone's
2606 Sheridan
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74129

Jamail's
3114 Kirby Drive
Houston, Texas 77001

Progress Grocery
915 Decatur
New Orleans, Louisiana 70116

st

American Tea, Coffee and Spice Co.
1511 Champa Street
Denver, Colorado 80202

Bezjian's Grocery
4725 Santa Monica Blvd.
Los Angeles, California 90029

Specialty Spice Shop
Pike Place Market
Seattle, Washington 98101

nada

The Bay—Food Department
8th Avenue and 1st Street S.W.
Calgary 2, Alberta

The T. Eaton Company
190 Yonge Street
Toronto 205, Ontario

The S. Enkin Inc., Imports and Exports
1201 St. Lawrence
Montreal 18, Quebec

Index

Addled Brains Palanpur (*Bheja*), 151–53
Almond (s)
  Cobra Cooler, 190–91
  Sauce, Meat with Imperial, 104–105
Ancestral Stewpot (*Berbat*), 165–66
Ancient Rice (*Til Wala Chawal*), 300–301
Appetite, how to renew, 43–44
Apples, Emperor's, 106–107
Appuma (rice dessert), 302

Bananas of Benares (*Kele ke Barde*), 233–34
Baroda (Central India), 173–82
Benarasi Cauliflower (*Benarasi Gobi*), 242–243
Benares (North India), 231–44
Betel-Leaf *Paan*, 311–12
Between-the-Battles Baked Vegetable (*Bangan ka Bhurtha*), 119–20
Beverages
  Cobra Cooler, 190–91
  Coconut Cream, 303
  Coconut Milk, 303
  Original Curry, 296–97
  Tea, 307–10
Bikaner (Rajasthan), 125–33
Birth ceremony, 235–38
Brains
  Bheje ka Bhujia, 134–35
  Palanpur, Addled, 151–53
  See also Meat dishes
Bread
  Breakfast of Shah Jehan, 275–76
  Corn, 230
  Puris, 226–27
  rice (*dosa*), 302
  Third Hand, 99–100
  Well-Behaved, 109–10
Breakfast of Shah Jehan (*Bahadur Shahi Roti*), 275–76

Camel's Humph Kababs (*Ande ka Kabab*), 125–26
Camp Corn (*Kees*), 185–86
Central India, 157–208
  Ancestral Stewpot, 165–66
  Camp Corn, 185–86
  Central Indian Peas and Potatoes, 179–80
  Central Indian Tripe, 164
  Chicken for Chickens, 192–94
  Cobra Cooler, 190–91
  Dessert for the Darkness, 178–79
  Early Morning Eggs, 189–90
  Edible Edifice, 199–201
  Elegant Egg, 170–71
  Founders' Feast, 203–204
  Fried Chicken for After the Hunt, 181–82
  Green Chili Preserves, 194–95
  Heart, 181
  His Highness Eats Peacock Eggs, 175–76
  Hyderabad's Most Acclaimed Curry, 205–206
  Nepalese Potentato, 169–70
  Nepalese Pungent Pea, 171–72
  Poppy Seed Fish, 162–63
  Seven Dynasty Dessert, 198–99
  Solid Spinach, 166–67
  Spicy Side Dish, 191
  Tomatoes Ali Pasha, 201–203

Central India (*continued*)
Twenty-Four-Hour Turnip, 167–69
Vegetarian Pullao, 186–89
Well-Spiced Shank, 177
Central Indian Peas and Potatoes (*Allu Batla ki Bhaji*), 179–80
Central Indian Tripe (*Banga*), 164
Cheese (*Paneer*), 83–84
Chick-Pea
Pasta (*Panolia*), 243–44
Pullao (*Channe ka Pullao*), 270–71
Chicken, *see* Poultry
Chicken, Cinnamon, and Steam (*Murg Dalchini*), 218–19
Chicken for Chickens (*Murgi Survedar*), 192–94
Chicken Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts (*Murgi ka Kima*), 100–102
Chili Bird and Salt (*Shikari Murgi*), 118
Chili Preserves, Green, 194–95
Chutney, 58
Cinnamon, Chicken, and Steam, 218–19
Clarified butter, 2, 10, 23
Fragrant, 42
immortal nectar, 80, 84–85
preparing, 85–86
to prevent congealing of, 172
Clouds of Curds (*Dahi ka Kabab*), 138–39
Cobra Cooler (*Harira*), 190–91
Coconut
Cream, 303
Milk, 303
oil, 4
preparing, 302–303
rice, 303–304
Vegetables and, for Those Who Like Neither (*Konkani Amti*), 304–307
Contentment, a Lentil Soup (*Sada Dal*), 70
Cool Sweet Side Dish (*Kele ka Raita*), 295–296
Coriander Korma (*Dhaniyawal Korma*), 258–259
Corn
Bread (*Makki ki Roti*), 230
Camp, 185–86
and Walnuts (*Makki Akroat*), 260
Cow, 75–81
Curry
Hyberabad's Most Acclaimed, 205–206
Original, 296–97
Curry powder (*masala*), 82
preparing, 57

Date Delight (*Khajur ka Halwa*), 276–78
Delhi, the Mughal Dynasty (North Indi 267–81
Desert Spare Ribs (*Bhansas Bikaner*), 1 128
Dessert (s)
for the Darkness (*Baroda Bhuran*), 1 179
Date Delight, 276–78
for a Dear and Heavy Heart (*Diljar* 91–92
Emperor's Apples, 106–107
Mango, 297–99
rice (*appuma*), 302
Seven Dynasty, 198–99
Sweet Innocence, 234–35
Twenty-Four-Carat Toast, 278–79
Wheat Sweet, 130–33
Dosa (rice bread), 302

Early Morning Eggs (*Andee ki Chutne* 189–90
Edible Edifice (*Dahi Pullao*), 199–201
Egg (s)
Camel's Humph Kababs, 125–26
Early Morning, 189–90
Elegant, 170–71
Instant, 149
Eldest Daughter-in-Law's Dinner, (*Pasandes*), 65–66
Elegant Egg, The (*Ande ka Acchar*), 170-
Emperor's Apples (*Seb ka Halva*), 106–

Feast-Day Meat (*Dilshad Korma*), 129–30
Feet-First Fish (*Kashmiri Macchi*), 255–57
Fish, extracting salt from oversalted, 43

Fish dishes
Feet-First, 255–57
Poppy Seed, 162–63
to Ward Off Evil Spirits (*Rai ki Macchi*), 62
without Any Bones, 42
Founders' Feast (*Kaliya Asaf Jha*), 203–204
Fowl, *see* Poultry
Fowl in Five Hundred Bats of an Eye (*Panch Minute ka Titan*), 137
Fragrant Clarified Butter, 42
Fried Chicken for After the Hunt (*Shikari Mungi*), 181–82
Fried Vegetables, Fit for a King (*Subzi Tali Hui*), 120–21
Fruit Pullao (*Motan Jan Pullao*), 107–109
Full Moon Kababs (*Sikampuri Kabab*), 73–74

Ginger root, preparing, 56
Green Chili Preserves (*Mirchi ka Acchar*), 194–95
Gwalior (Central India), 161–72

Heart, Central Indian (*Dil*), 181
Hindu cooking
caste and, 238–40
killing cow and, 78–80
Muslim cooking and, 27
old cookbooks for, 38–40
His Highness Eats Peacock Eggs (*Nauratani Kabab*), 175–76
Honey, 158
Hyderabad (Central India), 196–208
Hyderabad's Most Acclaimed Curry (*Do Pyaza*), 205–206

Indian cooking
cook and kitchen for, 20–30
old cookbooks for, 36–43
philosophy of, 10–11
properties of food for, 32–33
seasons and proper eating for, 14–17
sequence of meal for, 30–31
stages of life and, 17–20
techniques for, 9–10, 55–61, 63–64
Indori (Central India), 183–95
Instant Eggs (*Andee ka Hogina*), 149

Jaipur (Rajasthan), 103–12
Jodhpur (Rajasthan), 113–24

Kabab (s)
Camel's Humph, 125–26
Full Moon, 73–74
Kohinoor, 221–22
Lucknow, 273–75
preparation of, 145–46
Small and Round, 146–47
See also Meat dishes
Kashmir (North India), 245–65
Kishengarh (Rajasthan), 134–39
Kishengarh Kitchera, 135–36
Kohinoor Kabab (*Raan ka Kabab*), 221–22
Kulchas, 197–98

Lamb
Founders' Feast, 203–204
preparation of, 66
Snack, Spring, 251–53
Sulas, 89–91
Well-Spiced Shank, 177
See also Meat dishes
Lentil (s)
and Green Tomatoes (*Patiala Dal*), 228
Kishengarh Kitchera, 135–36
Opulentil, 205–206
for a Song (*Dogra Dal*), 262
Soup, Contentment, 70
Lucknow Kababs (*Seekh Kababs*), 273–75

Mango, serving, 297–99
Marinade, for stuffed rabbit, 97–98
Meat, 8
  cooking technique for, 9
  frying and turning of (*bhumano*), 59–60
  Hindu beliefs and, 238–41
  killing cow and, 78–80
  serving, with bones, 58
Meat dishes
  Ancestral Stewpot, 165–66
  Coriander Korma, 258–59
  Desert Spare Ribs, 127–28
  Eldest Daughter-in-Law's Dinner, 65–66
  Feast-Day, 129–30
  Fruit Pullao, 107–109
  Full Moon Kababs, 73–74
  His Highness Eats Peacock Eggs, 175–76
  Hyderabad's Most Acclaimed Curry, 205–206
  Kohinoor Kabab, 221–22
  Lucknow Kababs, 273–75
  Meat to Make with a Friend (*Shamshabadi Kaliya*), 76–77
  Meat to Separate the Boys from the Mince (*Hari Mirchi Wala Kima*), 72–73
  Meat with Any Vegetables (*Gobi Gosht*), 153–54
  Meat with Imperial Almond Sauce (*Kaliya Badami*), 104–105
  Meat with Silver Syrup, 42–43
  Milky Meat, 253–54
  Opulentil, 205–206
  Pomegranate Meat, 263–65
  Pullao to Administer Garlic to Those Who Would Avoid It, 142–45
  Shah Jehan's Last Stew, 279–81
  Small and Round Kababs, 146–47
  Something Simple, 53–61
  Sulas, 89–90
  Terrible Tomatoes and Meat, 225–26
  Three-Stage Overindulgence, 93–96
  Tripe with Saffron, 250–51
  Twenty-Four-Hour Turnips, 167–69
  Vindaloo, 291–95
  Wheat with Meat, 115–16
  Whole Spices, Ground Meat, 150–51
  See also Brain; Heart; Lamb
Milk
  immortal nectar, 82
  Sweet Innocence, 234–35
Milky Meat (*Aab Gosht*), 253–54
Muslim cooking
  of Akban the Great, 25–30
  meat eating and, 139
  old cookbooks and, 37–40
Mustard Greens (*Sarsoon ka Sag*), 228–29
Mustard oil, 172
Mustard seed, 63–64
Mysore (South India), 300–12

Nepalese Potentato, The (*Allu ka Acch*
  169–70
Nepalese Pungent Pea, The (*Nepali M*
  tar), 171–72
North India, 211–81
  Bananas of Benares, 233–34
  Benarasi Cauliflower, 242–43
  Breakfast of Shah Jehan, 275–76
  Chick-Pea Pasta, 243–44
  Chick-Pea Pullao, 270–71
  Chicken, Cinnamon, and Steam, 218–19
  Coriander Korma, 258–59
  Corn Bread, 230
  Corn and Walnuts, 260
  Date Delight, 276–78
  Feet-First Fish, 255–57
  Kohinoor Kabab, 221–22
  Lentils and Green Tomatoes, 228
  Lentils for a Song, 262
  Lucknow Kababs, 273–75
  Milky Meat, 253–54
  Mustard Greens, 228–29
  Patiala Vegetables, 219–20
  Pomegranate Meat, 263–65
  Potatoes to Perfume the Palace, 222–24
  Pungent Eggplant, 259–60
  Puris, 226–27
  Rice from the Foothills, 261–62
  Shah Jehan's Last Stew, 279–81
  Spring Lamb Snack, 251–53
  Sweet Innocence, 234–35
  Tandoori Game Hens, 272–73
  Terrible Tomatoes and Meat, 225–26

North India (*continued*)
Tripe with Saffron, 250–51
Twenty-Four-Carat Toast, 278–79
Water-Chestnut Snack, 257–58

Onion, preparing, 58–59
Opium, 121–24
Opulentil, The (*Dal aur Bheja ka Daliya*), 205–206
Original Curry (*Lassi Masaledar*), 296–97

Palanpur (Rajasthan), 140–54
Paneer, 83–84
Pastry, for minced-meat, 94
Pastry filling, for minced-meat, 94–95
Patiala (North India), 215–30
Patiala Vegetables (*Subzi Patiala*), 219–20
Peas
Nepalese Pungent, 171–72
and Potatoes, Central Indian, 179–80
Pigs' feet, soup, 70–72
Pomegranate Meat (*Kala Maz*), 263–65
Poppy Seed Fish (*Macchi ka Acchar*), 162–163
Potatoes
Central Indian Peas and, 179–80
Nepalese Potentato, 169–70
to Perfume the Palace (*Dum Allu*), 222–224
Pots, 7, 23–24
meat preparation and, 60
Poultry dishes
Almond Sauce, 104–105
Chicken, Cinnamon, and Steam, 218–19
Chicken for Chickens, 192–94
Chicken Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts, 100–102
Chili Bird and Salt, 118
Edible Edifice, 199–201
Fowl in Five Hundred Bats of an Eye, 137
Fried Chicken for After the Hunt, 181–82
Milky Meat, 253–54
Shah Jehan's Last Stew, 279–81
Sulas, 89–90
Tandoori Game Hens, 272–73
Twenty-Four-Hour Turnip, 167–69
Virgin Chicken, 110–12
Preserves, Green Chili, 194–95
Pullao
to Administer Garlic to Those Who Would Avoid It (*Saadaa Pullao*), 142–45
Chick-Pea, 270–71
Fruit, 107–109
Spinach and Roses, 141–42
Vegetarian, 186–89
Pungent Eggplant (*Khatta Bangan*), 259–60
Puris, 226–27

Rabbit Food, Rajput, 96–99
Rajasthan, 49–154
Addled Brains Palanpur, 151–53
Between-the-Battles Baked Vegetables, 119–20
Brains, 134–35
Camel's Humph Kababs, 125–26
Chicken Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts, 100–102
Chili Bird and Salt, 118
Clarified Butter, 85–86
Clouds of Curds, 138–39
Contentment, a Lentil Soup, 70
Desert Spare Ribs, 127–28
Dessert for a Dear and Heavy Heart, 91–92
Eldest Daughter-in-Law's Dinner, 65–66
Emperor's Apples, 106–107
Feast-Day Meat, 129–30
Fish to Ward Off Evil Spirits, 62
Fowl in Five Hundred Bats of an Eye, 137
Fried Chicken, Fit for a King, 120–21
Fruit Pullao, 107–109
Instant Eggs, 149
Kishengarh Kitchera, 135–36
Meat to Make with a Friend, 76–77
Meat to Separate the Boys from the Mince, 72–73
Meat with Any Vegetables, 153–54
Meat with Imperial Almond Sauce, 104–105
Paneer, 83–84
Pullao to Administer Garlic to Those Who Would Avoid It, 142–45

Rajasthan (*continued*)
Rajput Rabbit Food, 96–99
Rice, plain, 66–69
Small and Round Kababs, 146–47
Something Simple, 54–61
Spinach and Roses, 141–42
Sulas, 89–91
Third Hand Bread, 99–100
Three-Stage Overindulgence, 93–96
Undecipherable Dip, 92–93
Unorthodox Soup, 70–72
Well-Behaved Bread, 109–10
Wheat with Meat, 115–16
Wheat Sweet, 130–33
Whole Spices, Ground Meat, 150–51
Wife-Saving Salad, 147–48
Virgin Chicken, 110–12
Yogurt, preparing, 83
Yogurt—Tart and Spicy, 113–14
Rajput Rabbit Food (*Khuda Khargosh*), 96–99
Red pepper, preparing, 56
Remedy for a Rich Patient Overheated with Wine, 310–11
Rennet, 83–84
Rice
bread (*dosa*), 302
preparing, 65–69
proper eating of, 2
Rice dishes
Ancient, 300–301
Chick-Pea Pullao, 270–71
Coconut, 303–304
for Edible Edifice, 200–201
Kishengarh Kitchera, 135–36
Plain, 69
Pullao to Administer Garlic to Those Who Avoid It, 142–45
Rice from the Foothills (*Chawel Kardi*), 261–62
Spinach and Roses, 141–42
Vegetarian Pullao, 186–89

Saag (green vegetable), 213
Saffron, 246–50
Tripe with, 250–51
Sailana (Rajasthan), 53–86
Salt, 116–17
Sauce
Meat with Imperial Almond, 104–105
for Three-Stage Overindulgence, 95–96
Seven Dynasty Dessert (*Badam ke Kulche*), 198–99
Shah Jehan's Last Stew (*Shah Jehani Korma*), 279–81
Side dishes
Bananas of Benares, 233–34
Chick-Pea Pasta, 243–44
Clouds of Curds, 138–39
Cool Sweet Side Dish, 295–96
Green Chili Preserves, 194–95
Paneer, 83–84
Tomatoes Ali Pasha, 201–203
Undecipherable Dip, 92–93
Water Chestnut Snack, 257–58
Wife-Saving Salad, 147–48
Yogurt—Tart and Spicy, 113–14
Small and Round Kababs (*Shammi Kabab*), 146–47
Solid Spinach (*Patel Bhaji*), 166–67
Something Simple (*Sailana Seekh*), 54–61
Soup
Contentment, a Lentil, 70
Lentils for a Song, 262
Opulentil, 205–206
Patiala Vegetables, 219–20
Unorthodox (pigs' feet), 70–72
Vegetables and Coconut for Those Who Like Neither, 304–307
Yogurt—Tart and Spicy, 113–14
South India, 285–312
Ancient Rice, 300–301
Betel-Leaf *Paan,* 311–12
Coconut Cream, 303
Coconut Milk, 303
Coconut Rice, 303–304
Cool Sweet Side Dish, 295–96
Mango, 297–99
Original Curry, 296–97
Remedy for a Rich Patient Overheated with Wine, 310–11
Tea, 307–10
Vegetables and Coconut for Those Who Like Neither, 304–307
Vindaloo, 291–93

Spare Ribs, Desert, 127–28
Spices, 8
  preparing, 24, 56–58, 63–64
Spicy Side Dish (*Jam ki Lonji*), 191
Spinach
  and Roses (*Palak Pullao*), 141–42
  Solid, 166–67
Spring Lamb Snack (*Kashmiri Tubbak Maz*), 251–53
Stuffing, for rabbit, 98
Sugar, 158
Sulas, 89–91
Sweet Innocence (*Kir*), 234–35

Tandoori Game Hens (*Tandoori Murgh*), 272–73
Tea (*Cawa*), 307–10
Terrible Tomatoes and Meat (*Rogan Josh*), 225–26
Third Hand Bread (*Chapati*), 99–100
Three-Stage Overindulgence (*Dahi Samosa Maz*), 93–96
Tomatoes
  Ali Pasha (*Tamatar ki Kaat*), 201–203
  Lentils and Green, 228
  and Meat, Terrible, 225–26
Travancore-Cochin (South India), 289–99
Tripe
  Central Indian, 164
  with Saffron (*Methi Maz*), 250–51
  See also Meat dishes
Turmeric, 89
Turnip, Twenty-Four-Hour, 167–69
Twenty-Four-Carat Toast (*Shahi Tukere*), 278–79
Twenty-Four-Hour Turnip (*Shubdeg*), 167–69

Udaipur (Rajasthan), 87–102
Undecipherable Dip (*Bahadur Shahi Dahi*), 92–93
Unorthodox Soup (*Haleem*), 70–72

Vegetable dishes
  Benarasi Cauliflower, 242–43
  Between-the-Battles Baked Vegetables, 119–20
  Camp Corn, 185–86
  Central Indian Peas and Potatoes, 179–80
  Chick-Pea Pasta, 243–44
  Corn and Walnuts, 260
  Fried Vegetables, Fit for a King, 120–21
  Lentils and Green Tomatoes, 228
  Mustard Greens, 228–29
  Nepalese Potentato, 169–70
  Nepalese Pungent Pea, 171–72
  Patiala Vegetables, 219–20
  Potatoes to Perfume the Palace, 222–24
  Pungent Eggplant, 259–60
  Solid Spinach, 166–67
  Spinach and Roses, 141–42
  Vegetables and Coconut for Those Who Like Neither (*Konkani Amti*), 304–307
  Vegetarian Pullao, 186–89
Vegetarian Pullao (*Subzi ka Pullao*), 186–89
Vegetarians, Hindu beliefs and, 239–42
Vindaloo, 291–93
Virgin Chicken (*Sufaid Maaz*), 110–12

Walnuts and Corn (*Makki Akroat*), 260
Water-Chestnut Snack (*Singarde Tale Hue*), 257–58
Well-Behaved Bread (*Bahadur Shahi Roti*), 109–10
Well-Spiced Shank (*Addlay ka Korma*), 177
Wheat
  with Meat (*Soweeta*), 115–16
  Sweet (*Lapsi*), 130–33
Whole Spices, Ground Meat (*Kharde Masale ka Kima*), 150–51
Wife-Saving Salad (*Sukhi Dal*), 147–48

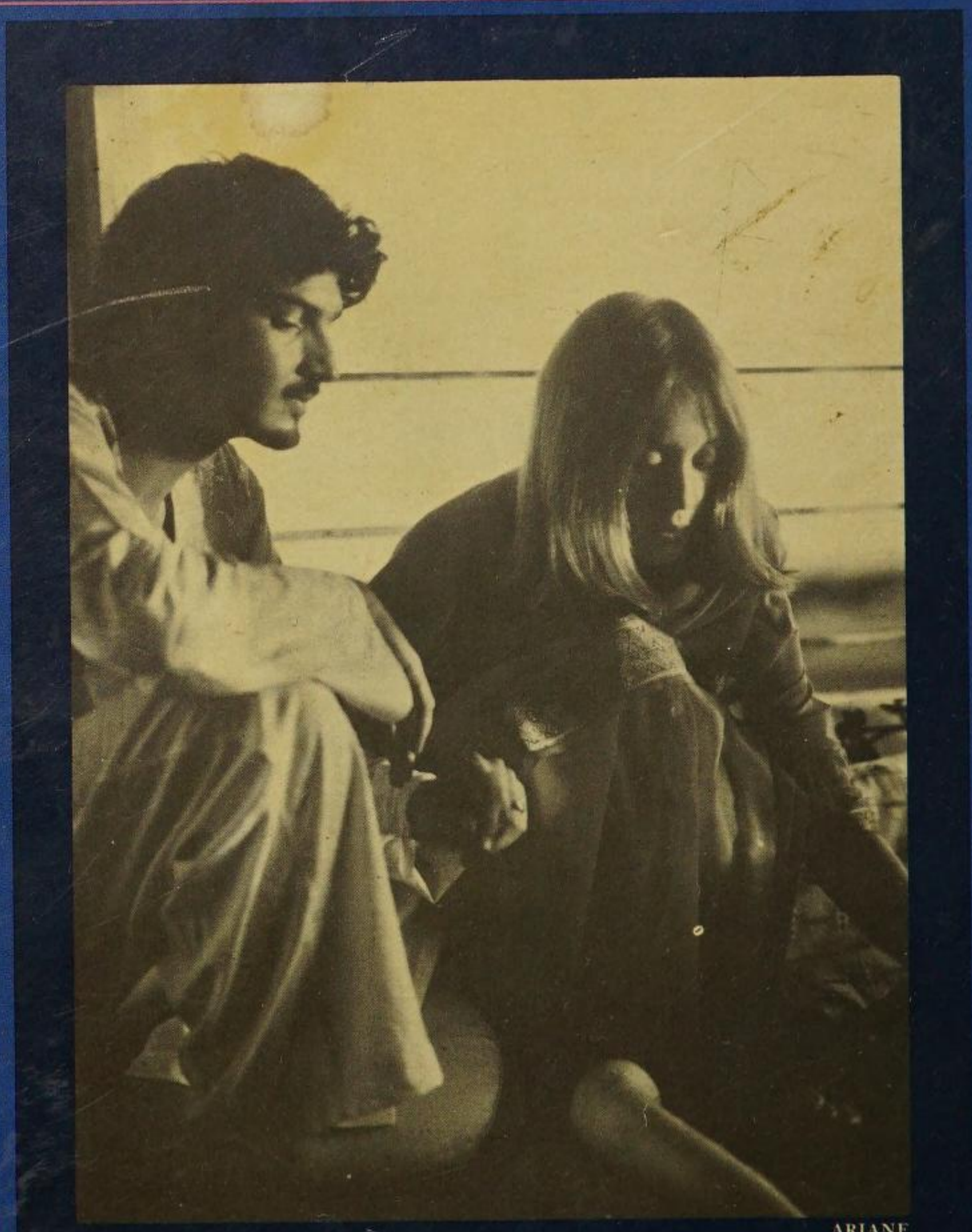
Yogurt
  immortal nectar, 82–83
  preparing, 55–56, 63, 83
  –Tart and Spicy (*Kardi*), 113–14
  Undecipherable Dip, 92–93

(continued from front flap)

Mughal dishes of Delhi to the intriguing vegetarian recipes of Southern India; each can be reproduced exactly in American kitchens in its truly exotic and surprisingly low-cost form. A book to dress up any dinner, *The Cooking of the Maharajas* has a very special, and very genuine, appeal.

When Shivaji Rao and Shalini Devi Holkar were married in December 1966, in the state of Indore in India, the AP wire service headline read: "Average American girl marries Indian prince." This statement was only partly true: Shivaji Rao Holkar was certainly a prince—the son of the Maharaja of Indore—and Shalini Devi Holkar was certainly an American girl, but there was nothing "average" about her or about their lives. The young couple met at Stanford University, where they were studying political science, and were married after graduation, first in Dallas, where she grew up, and then in Indore. Since that time, as Richard and Sally Holkar, they have lived in India, the United States, and France, where they are now rebuilding an old French house in Grasse. In addition to being superb cooks and dedicated students of Indian literature and lore, Richard, who is also a photographer, and Sally are enthusiastic travelers.

THE VIKING PRESS
Publishers of
The Viking Portable Library
and Viking Compass paperbacks
625 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10022
Printed in U.S.A.



ARIANE

Jacket design by Jacqueline Schuman

Painting on front of jacket: *Shah Tahmasp in the Mountains*, School of Jahangir, Mughal, I